



LEFT:
Litchard
Primary
School
headteacher
receives
MBE.
(See
report on
page 19).

Bridgend & Porthcawl

GEM



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THURSDAY, JANUARY 3RD, 2013

Christmas swim puts Porthcawl on the map!

PORThCAWL'S Christmas Morning Swim is now only two years from the magic '50' - and the 48th turned out to be one of the mildest days in its history.

With the tide coming in, more than 900 swimmers walked and ran down the beach and took the traditional Christmas morning dip at Sandy Bay, while an estimated 2,000-plus spectators cheered.

Spokesman Ian Stroud said: "Porthcawl Coastguards cleared a path down the beach for the swimmers - many in fancy dress.

"The procession was led from the Hi-Tide Inn to the beach by Victor Davies and Chris Hughes - each with 45 plus swims to their name.

"Swimmers from all over the UK and overseas took part. Among our regulars was veteran swimmer Susan Powell from Caldicot, Monmouthshire, who hasn't missed a swim since 1978."

He continued: "The swim is a truly family event with many different generations of the same family taking to the sea.

"Among today's swimmers were two visitors from South Africa, 20-year-old Thomas Owens and his 18-year-old brother Jamie - grandchildren of the late Arlon Owens, who was one of the founder members of the Christmas swim.

"Their father, Peter Owens, brought his family over to Porthcawl to spend Christmas with his brother, Gareth and sister Wendy Richards.

"This was a very special family reunion. Grandfather Arlon was chairman of the Swim Committee for many of the earlier years."

Peter Owens said, "The two boys were very keen



ABOVE: These two groups were (mostly) still smiling after braving the cold water. (Pictures by MALCOLM NUGENT).



to enter the swim. Every year at home, we always follow the tradition of the Christmas morning swim and carry the Welsh flag to the water's edge.

"Of course, the climate and the sea is much warmer in South Africa. In Porthcawl, my brother Gareth continues our father's tradition of dressing as 'Coco' the clown at the swim, while my sister Wendy has served on the committee as vice chairman for many years, just proving how much of a family affair it is."

The Swim Committee chairman, Nicola Willis,

said: "Once again, we are grateful to all who supported the swim and the number of people who turned up was fantastic.

"Collections are made during carol singing and during the swim; we hope the collections and swimmers' sponsorship will help us to make generous donations in the New Year. Our two main beneficiaries will be Porthcawl RNLI and Wales Air Ambulance.

"As a small committee, we are delighted with the support once again this year. I would like to thank

all swimmers, spectators, individuals, businesses, fellow 'Buckaneers' and organisations who help in so many ways to make the swim such a successful event in the town's calendar.

"To have such a crowded beach at this time of the year, goes to prove that some of our departed founder swimmers were looking down on us, and provided us with good weather for a swim that saw more people in the water than most summer bank holidays, especially this year!"

Jail sentence for a Maesteg man after police drugs swoop

DRUGS with a street value of over £10,000 were found when police searched a house in Maesteg in September.

Cardiff Crown Court heard the drugs were found in a safe.

Robert Owen 49, of Picton Street, was

jailed for a total of 18 months.

Recorder Malcolm Bishop QC said: "You played a significant role in the drugs operation discovered by the police."

Owen admitted possessing cannabis with intent to supply. At 8.45am on September 14, said prosecutor Tony Trigg, officers

Report by AJ SICLUNA

searched Owen's home and found the drugs, worth £10,600, in a carrier bag in a safe.

"Some of the drug had been prepared as street deals and the majority of it was destined for sale. Owen himself was a long

term drugs user. His likely profit was half the street value," said Mr Trigg.

The officers also found £2,000 in cash and a mobile phone on which were discovered drug-related text messages. In addition, there was a set of scales and resealable bags.

Owen was said to have previous convictions

for possessing cannabis with intent to supply, cultivating cannabis and burglary.

His counsel, Nicola Harris, said: "The cash belonged to his mother. He is an arthritis sufferer and he used cannabis for pain relief."

The Recorder said that in the past, he had been given exceptionally lenient sentences for drugs offences by Vale Magistrates.

"Three weeks later, there you were again, I am satisfied, into the supply of a substantial amount of cannabis."

"This was in complete disregard of the leniency the magistrates accorded you."

"You have been given chance after chance to behave yourself."

He was jailed for 12 months for possessing cannabis with intent, and six months to run consecutively, for the breach of a suspended sentence for possessing crack cocaine.

Bridgend features in New Year's Honours

A number of people with strong Bridgend county borough connections received honours in the New Year's Honours list.

David Brace, chairman of the Dunraven Group, received an OBE for services to business and to charities in Bridgend. Mr Brace has been a long-time supporter of the annual charity fund organised by the Mayor of Bridgend County Borough.

Susan Davies, the headteacher at Cynffig Comprehensive School, received an OBE for services to education.

The Leader of Bridgend County

Borough Council, Coun Mel Nott, received an OBE for services to the community and local government.

Dr Wyn Price of Pontycymer, the head of emergencies at the Welsh Government received an OBE for services to civil contingency and emergency planning in Wales.

The British Empire Medal was awarded to Mr Ian Clough of Bridgend for charity work for communities in Kenya and Coity.

The British Empire Medal was also awarded to Eileen Pryce of Bridgend for services to the community in the Garw Valley.

(CONTINUED ON PAGE 19)

Family tribute to man 'with a love of life'

THE family of a man who died in a fatal road traffic collision which took place just after 3pm on New Year's Eve in Blaengarw, have paid a loving tribute to him.

Dwain Gareth Joyce (29) from Oxford Street, Pontycymer, was involved in the incident in Gwendoline Street, Blaengarw, at 3.07pm.

Mr Joyce's family said: "Dwain was an energetic, outgoing person with a love of life.

"He will be sorely missed as a son, brother and partner and has tragically died doing something he loved.

"We want to thank everyone for their help and support and ask, as a family, that we be given time to grieve."

South Wales Police continue to investigate the circumstances surrounding the collision and are appealing for witnesses to come forward.

Police officers want to hear from people in the area who may have heard the noise of the off-road motorcycle



ABOVE:

Dwain Gareth Joyce: 'A loving son, brother and partner.'

before the incident occurred.

Anyone with information is urged to contact the Roads Policing Unit on 01656 869332, or the non emergency 101 number or Crimestoppers on 0800 555 111.

PORThCAWL LIFEBOAT'S RESCUE IN STORMY SEAS

PORThCAWL RNLI's new boat passed a stern test in high seas when it rescued a surfer who was being swept out to sea.

At 9.10am on Monday, December 17, Porthcawl RNLI lifeboat was launched to rescue a surfer in difficulties at Coney Beach, Porthcawl.

The station's D Class Lifeboat, Jean Ryall, launched with three volunteer crew in very rough seas, with a strong outgoing tide.

The lifeboat quickly brought the man into the boat, and he was taken to the lifeboat station. The

surfer told the crew that he had been caught in a strong rip current, which was taking him out to sea, and had been unable to make his way back to the beach.

Steve Knipe, the helmsman, said: "It was a good job the call was put into the coastguard immediately someone saw him in trouble.

"If the call had been delayed, he would have no doubt been taken out to sea by the tide, and we would have had a major search on our hands."

Philip Missen, operations manager at the station, said: "Again, our new additional lifeboat, the D

Class boat, Jean Ryall, has proved her worth.

"The D Class was able to manoeuvre quickly and safely in the surf and get to the surfer, who was very close to the sea wall.

"Surfers should be aware that during large tides such as the one we have just had, there is a danger of rip currents in the Coney Beach area.

"When surfing in such conditions, it is recommended that you either surf with a friend, or inform someone you are going surfing, and let them know an estimated time you will be returning"

Local MP meets helpers on the breakfast run



Madeleine Moon MP paid a visit to the team at The Wallich.

BRIDGEND MP Madeleine Moon, met Lee Thomas, deputy project manager at The Wallich, a homeless charity in Bridgend, recently to present a donation to the organisation – money earned for completing parliamentary surveys.

The MP reported:

"We talked about the impact of the benefit changes that were coming and how many people were sleeping rough around Bridgend."

"At the time of my visit, I met people who had come in after sleeping on the streets to access The Wallich for their support services."

"The Wallich has provided accommodation and vital support

services to the homeless for more than 30 years all across Wales."

"In Bridgend, they run a number of projects that support the homeless, such as the Vesta Project, Cornerstone House and Streets Ahead."

"The Wallich also have a rough sleepers intervention team, Bridgend Bond Board and a tenancy support service."

"The rough sleepers intervention team had been out on the breakfast run and found several people sleeping rough on the streets."

"At this coldest time of year, the team help by providing hot food and drink and, when available, sleeping bags or storm tents."

"I am aware that nationally, rough sleeping has risen by 23 per cent, and Bridgend will face its own share of the problem."

"The Wallich also have a solutions worker, who can meet with people who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless, and help them to find solutions to problems they are facing."

For further information, contact The Wallich, 10 Park Street, Bridgend, CF31 4AX. Phone: 01656 674 184, fax: 01656 665496, email: bridgend@thewallich.net, or visit: www.thewallich.com.

Freda Rogers

COMMUNITY NEWS ST BRIDES MAJOR

Your local correspondent is
Patricia Bevan-Morgan
(01656) 880418

THE festive season on the Heritage Coast began when an open day was held at the Heritage Centre, Dunraven, Southendown, where a large gathering enjoyed a quiz/film show by the Rangers.

Paul and Helen showed the activities which had taken place around our delightful coastline, with some photos of cloud formation, flora and fauna – and some of the spectacular cliff falls which have taken place – making it more important to stress the fact that being near the cliffs is very dangerous.

The films were followed by mince pies and homemade cakes, mulled wine and fruit cup.

A raffle took place, with some lovely prizes to finish off a very pleasant afternoon.

THE local produce market was held at the church hall, with very festive stalls. This was followed by a hearty Christmas lunch for members and helpers at the Fox and Hounds, St Brides Major.

THERE was more festive

fare when the members of Omore Retired Residents met for lunch at the Farmers Arms, St Brides Major.

Everyone exchanged greetings and will meet again to start the new year in the Water Mill, Omore village (their old stomping ground) for a traditional lunch on Thursday, January 17.

TEN remaining members of the late Thursday Club got together for a lunch at the Farmers Arms.

A big thank you goes to Dawn for organising the lunch and for the beautiful calendar which we have each year, with wonderful pictures of the area, and this year of the caves and Dunraven Bay.

It was good to see Ivy, who is in her 93rd year and a stalwart member for many years, enjoying the occasion.

Unfortunately, member numbers were lower this year, but thoughts went out to times past – over 60 plus years.

WICK Chapel had a service of carols, readings and goodwill on Sunday, December 16.

Rotarians' new member, Natasha



Left to right: Sonja Cain, Natasha Kerr and Rotary president, Rev Mike Lewis.

BRIDGEND Rotary Club recently welcomed local mother of two, Ms Natasha Kerr, as a member.

Natasha's work profile is in graphic design – marketing, and she is passionate about being able to offer her spare time to assist the community and those less fortunate.

Natasha is known as a woman who enjoys family life and she is always willing to assist those in need who cross her path.

Skerr WI news

THE December meeting of Skerr WI was held recently in St David's Hall, Nottage, when 62 members enjoyed a fish and chip supper.

Social time was followed by two quizzes, which caused plenty of laughter, and pass the parcel. A very enjoyable evening ended with the singing of Christmas carols.

During the last month, members enjoyed the pantomime at the Grand Pavilion in Porthcawl, put on by members of

the various WIs in Glamorgan, and the Christmas fayre at Trinity Church Hall went well.

There was a shopping trip to Cheltenham, and there are plenty of activities coming up in next year's programme, with interesting speakers and days out.

The Link meeting is being hosted by Skerr WI this year in the spring, and there will also be the half yearly council meeting.

The next meeting will be on Thursday, January 10.

Ann Vipond

Rotary club's project helps Trust to improve its facilities



ABOVE: Volunteers from the Rotary Club of Bridgend have helped finish the first stage of the ILC at Amelia Trust Farm.

THE Rotary Club of Bridgend has completed the first stage of the Independent Living Centre (ILC) for the Amelia Trust Farm.

The project has been ongoing since late June 2012.

The centre will train vulnerable young adults in subjects such as: how to cook, prepare meals, wash, launder and generally help support themselves in becoming independent.

As part of the project, the Amelia Trust is funding most of the kitchen equipment, fittings and furnishings, but the main kitchen units, work tops, extractor fan and fridge freezer have been provided by the Rotary Club of Bridgend with the aid of a Rotary District Grant.

The Rotary Club organised specialists and has installed all the kitchen units, including a range to suit disabled/wheelchair users, and refurbished the whole area, including flooring repairs, fitting a new suspended ceiling, wall tiling, plastering, electrics, plumbing, heating and general decoration.

The trust will continue with some re-glazing, door replacement and decoration to the adjoining lecture room.

Mr Malcolm Jones (education manager) did a sponsored cycle ride in July last year from Athens to Cardiff, some 2,197 miles in 21 days, raising enough money to install a kitchen, laundry equipment, utensils, crockery, and furniture.

The Rotary Club of Bridgend wishes to acknowledge the immense contribution made by Mr Malcolm Jones, Rtn Mark English of Llantwit Major Rotary Club (formerly a member of the Bridgend branch) and our own Rotarians Neil Solman and past president John Ward.

WM

BAVO receives £1m to give communities a stronger voice

BRIDGEND Association of Voluntary Organisations (BAVO) has received a grant of £1m for the next four years from the Big Lottery Fund 'Community Voice' programme, to help give communities in Bridgend county a stronger voice in local decision making.

BAVO will help local communities influence policies and decisions that affect them, so that their needs are better met through the seven projects they will be working on.

An estimated 2,040 people will benefit, including the disabled, young adult carers, people who self-harm, older

people (particularly those aged 50-60), the lesbian, gay, bi-sexual and transgender community, people with learning disabilities and residents from the Omore Valley.

BAVO's chief executive officer, Heidi Bennett, said: "The common aim of the various projects is to support organisations and individuals, particularly minority groups and groups that find it difficult to participate."

"In helping them have a voice and to contribute to decisions about services that are designed for them or are supposed to meet their needs, we feel service providers will be in a better place to deliver good services and make improvements."

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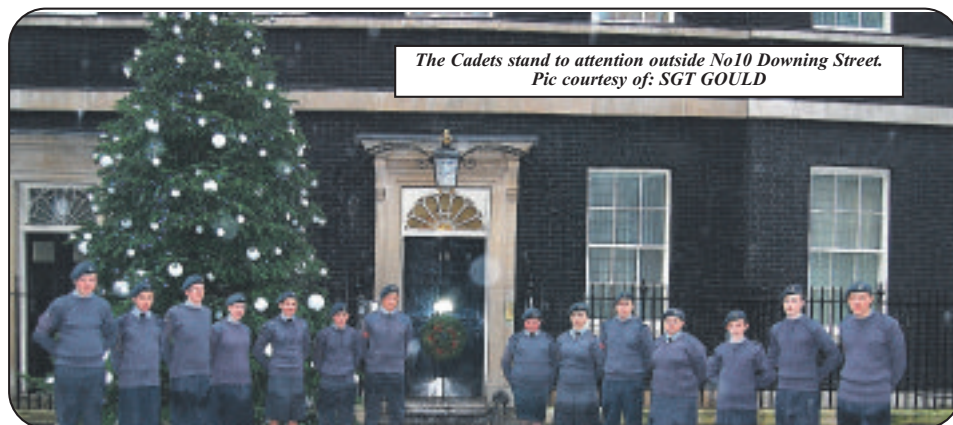
HIGH TIDE TIMES (UNTIL JANUARY 10)

The high tides listed in this week's GEM are those in Porthcawl. It should be remembered that along the coast, high tide times will vary. For instance, in Barry, the high point will be 20 – 25 minutes later.

DATE	Time AM	Ht M	Time PM	Ht M
03 Thur	09.46	9.0	22.11	8.6
04 Fri	10.31	8.8	22.59	8.3
05 Sat	11.16	8.4	23.49	8.2
06 Sun			12.22	8.4
07 Mon	00.59	8.2	13.39	8.3
08 Tues	02.25	8.4	15.01	8.5
09 Wed	03.33	8.6	16.11	8.8
10 Thur	04.44	9.3	17.06	9.4

While The GEM makes every effort to check the accuracy of tide tables, we recommend that anyone putting out to sea, or walking in an area where they could be cut off, should always check with a tide table specific to their location.

LOCAL CADETS SWOOP DOWN ON NUMBER 10



The Cadets stand to attention outside No10 Downing Street. Pic courtesy of: SGT GOULD

IT was cold, dark and wet, but that didn't dampen the spirits of those from Kenfig Hill and Porthcawl Air Cadets who headed off for a four-day stay at RAF Northolt.

The trip included visits to No10 Downing Street, the Second World War Bomber Command Memorial, Battle of Britain Bunkers at RAF Uxbridge and a selection of museums in London, all under the

supervision of Sgt (ATC) Richard Peckham and Sgt (ATC) Kevin Gould.

They visited the World War Two Bomber Command Memorial in Green Park, and then made their way to Buckingham Palace, not to meet the Queen, but just to have a look.

After lunch they were shown around the stables of the Household Cavalry Museum, and were given the opportunity to try on some of the uniforms – but the line was drawn at them trying out the horses!

Next stop was No 10;

the weather by now had turned for the worse and was quite wet, although once again that didn't deter the group.

Next came a tour of some of the museums, namely the National Army Museum and the Royal Hospital Chelsea. They saw exhibits ranging from the Boer War to the present day.

The next stop was the National Science Museum, which gave the cadets a chance to have a look at some of the exhibits first hand – this was great fun as well as being educational, and that was for staff

and cadets alike.

The last day saw the cadets being shown around the Battle of Britain Bunkers at RAF Uxbridge. They were given a full explanation of how the bunker operated at the time.

Staff and cadets from Kenfig Hill and Porthcawl would like to thank the following people without whom this trip would not have been possible: Pyle and Kenfig Hill British Legion, Bridgend British Legion, Porthcawl and Kenfig Hill RAFA Club, Pyle Community Council,

Kenfig Hill ATC Civilian Committee, Wick Van Hire, Cowbridge ATC, Mrs Madeleine Moon MP and, most of all, the people both in the service and civilians who work at RAF Northolt and took time to look after the party while they were in London.

Lindsay Thomas
Secretary, civilian committee

'Who wants to come to Wales?'

WHEN will our AMs wake up to the fact that it's all right to promote the Welsh language, but when jobs are needed so badly, why do companies have to do all the administration in Welsh as well as English?

The cost must be enormous and it's no wonder industry is put off coming here and why many are closing down and going elsewhere.

What with the Severn Bridge toll and the cost of bilingual administration, who wants to come to Wales?

They say we are all in this together, which in some ways is true, there are many of us working part-time like the AMs.

FLAT PACK ASSEMBLY
Ah, the Welsh Assembly, now that's the job. We all know that's worth a few bob. You can sit on your chair and talk all day, for a super pension and terrific pay.

Expenses too! That's another racket, for an even bigger pay packet.

You can fly first class any time, anywhere, especially to Brussels, without a care. Don't worry about the country getting in a mess, just put up your feet and say yes. Colin Dudley, Barry.

First Minister drops in to meet Royal Mail staff



FIRST Minister Carwyn Jones, AM for Bridgend, made a festive visit to Bridgend Delivery Office (pictured) over the busy Christmas period to wish postmen and women well as they prepared to deliver fes-

tive cards and parcels to local residents.

He said: "It is always a pleasure to meet our hard working postal workers. People should never underestimate the tremendous effort and teamwork involved with getting the Christmas post to people on time."

Bridgend MP in talks on local job losses



MADELEINE MOON, the MP for Bridgend was among a group of Welsh Labour MPs meeting the Secretary of State for Wales to discuss the recent announcement of job losses and restructuring at Port Talbot.

Madeleine Moon MP with Secretary of State for Wales and Welsh Labour colleagues.



Find out why the Smurfs were all dressed up and ready to swim on page 5!

It was organised following the recent announcement by TATA Steel that around 600 jobs would be lost at Port Talbot.

The MP said: "I am very concerned by the possibility of such a large number of job losses which will undoubtedly affect some of my constituents, but also the wider economy of South Wales, so I was pleased that the Secretary of State agreed to meet us."

"The Secretary of State informed us that he has met representatives of TATA twice and intends to visit the Port Talbot works in the New Year. It was encouraging that he listened to all of the concerns and ideas we raised."

"I welcome the commitment he gave to work with us to help secure a viable future for steel manufacturing in Wales."

Local Service's charity's Christmas bonus from supermarket customers



ABOVE: Local charity 'Healing The Wounds' which works with Service personnel who have suffered from post-traumatic stress received a welcome Christmas bonus from customers at Sainsbury's in Bridgend.

Rachel Phillips, a support officer with Healing The Wounds (HTW), told The GEM: "Sainsbury's made us their official charity for the year last March, and it has been a huge benefit to us in raising funds and also raising our profile."

Last March, HTW was based in Tondy, quite near the Sainsbury's store but recently, it has moved to new offices in the Rest Convalescent Home, Porthcawl (01656 786380).

Pictured above (left to right) are: Rachel Phillips; Nick Jenkins (volunteer); Kevin Richards (HTW founder) and Amie Phillips (HTW fundraising co-ordinator).

PHOTOGRAPH by MANDY THOMAS

(www.mandythomasphotography.co.uk).

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Rotary thanks generous people in Bridgend area



Natasha and Sonja with Santa's sleigh and some of the Tesco management.

THE Bridgend Rotary Club annual collection at Tesco, Cowbridge Road, went very well, with great public support also from the local management and staff.

They enthusiastically entered into the spirit of

Going the Extra Mile to support those with Motor Neurone Disease

SUPPORT for people living with Motor Neurone Disease in Bridgend county borough has been recognised with a prestigious award.

The community independence and wellbeing team, made up of BCBC staff and the Abertawe Bro Morgannwg University Health Board, has received the Motor Neurone Disease (MND) Association's Extra Mile Award in recognition of their commitment to providing quality care for people living with MND.

A spokesperson explained that the integrated health and social care team, based in Trem y Mor, Bettws, helps local people with chronic, complex and long-term conditions which have an adverse impact on their day to day lives. This includes MND, an incurable and rapidly progressing neurodegenerative disease.

Members of the team were invited to a special ceremony at the Senedd to receive their Extra Mile award. Co-ordinated by the Association's South West Wales branch and co-sponsored by Keith Davies AM and Rebecca Evans AM, it was an opportunity to celebrate the hard work of health and social care professionals working on the front line.

John Prosser, chair of the south west Wales branch of the MND Association and the event organiser, said:

"As a former carer for my wife, who died in 2009 after an 18-month battle with MND, I believe it is important to give due credit to those that make every effort to support those affected by this terrible disease."

Coun Lyn Morgan, BCBC cabinet member for wellbeing, also offered his congratulations to the team: "This is a devastating disease. Half of those diagnosed with MND die within the first 14 months and the rapid nature means it's vital we offer access to timely and appropriate information and well co-ordinated care services."

"I have seen the difference good services make to the lives of people with MND and believe everyone with this devastating disease should be supported to maximise their quality of life."

"I'm immensely proud of the support offered by our team in Trem y Mor. We have embraced integrated working with our health colleagues precisely because we want to offer joined up services to residents when they need them."

"This award is testimony to that good work and the outstanding professionalism of those delivering it."

things by hopping into the Christmas sleigh for photographs with our collecting team.

Considering UK charity donations are down during these times of austerity, the public gave generously and as a result, highlighted that they are willing to give to local charities despite these difficult times.

Having Santa's sleigh there drew a lot more attention to our collection, and it was a big hit with families.

We are very grateful to the people of Bridgend who are always willing to give to our local charitable causes.

WAYNE B MORGAN

Christmas fayre at Trinity Church

NEWTON WI BRANCH NEWS

THE festive season was a very busy few weeks, starting with our Christmas fayre in Trinity Church, which was very successful.

Next came the GFWI pantomime in the Pavilion and our Christmas dinner that was enjoyed by everyone.

Our Monday meeting was a carol service. Rev Colin Richards was in charge and the ladies as usual excelled, singing the old familiar carols.

Rev Colin spoke about Christmas when he was a boy. He actual-

ly saw Father Christmas on his way home from the barbers!

He also spoke about the meaning of Christmas, which gave us all plenty to think about.

Our Christmas party went well, the committee prepared a wonderful buffet.

As usual, Jan made sure there was plenty to suit everyone. Pearl thanked everyone for coming and wished each of us a very Merry Christmas and a peaceful and healthy New Year.

To join us, call Pearl (01656 772657) or Pat (01656 788003).

PT

Air Cadets bag £2,268 by helping out at store

AIR Cadets and staff from Kenfig Hill spent the weekend bag-packing at Morrison's store in Baglan.

On Saturday, the Cadets were supervised by Sgt (ATC) Kevin Gould, Sgt (ATC) Richard Peckham and civilian Instructor Kinsey Williams.

Sunday saw the return of Sgt (ATC) Richard Peckham, along with civilian Instructor Chris Lewis and Civilian Committee members Mrs Claire Norris and Mrs Lindsay Thomas.

The bag-packing weekend in December is becoming an annual event in our calendar and the cadets really enjoy meeting the public.

The customers were really generous this year and the amount collected over the two days was £2,268.88, counted and bagged by Mr and Mrs Aston. Mrs Thomas, secretary of the Civilian

Committee, would like to thank the staff at Morrison's for their help in organising this event. The funds raised will go towards subsidising the Cadets in various activities such as weekend camps at MoD St Athan, summer camp, equipment for adventure training and various other activities.

This was the last planned activity for 2012 and everyone at 2117 (Kenfig Hill) Squadron is looking forward to the challenges and activities planned for 2013.

Flt Lt B C Thomas, Staff Cadets and Civilian Committee would like to take this opportunity to thank THE GEM for all the wonderful support they have given to the Squadron over the past 12 months; their support is invaluable.

LINDSAY THOMAS (Secretary, Civilian Committee)

YOUR CHANCE TO SHARE THE COMMUNITY NEWS



COMMUNITY NEWS from KENFIG HILL AND PYLE
by Richard Sims

Telephone: 01656 746840

Mobile: 07802 439679

E-Mail: richardsims@talktalk.net

Village concerts
CAROL singing in the villages of Kenfig Hill and Pyle has been very impressive this year.

There has been great support for the many superb concerts and carol services held in the local chapels, churches, infants, junior and comprehensive schools as well as the care and nursing homes throughout the festive season.

However, two concerts that particularly stood out were the ones held in Pysgah Chapel and Cynffig Comprehensive School.

The Pysgah Chapel Concert saw the choirs of Ysgol Y Ferch O'r Sger Primary School, Corneli, Pil Primary School, Pyle, Cefn Cribwr Infants and Junior School, Mynydd Cynffig Junior School join with the Crescendo Youth Choir and the Kenfig Hill and District Male Voice Choir to produce some of the best choral singing in the village for some time.

It was also good to see the chapel filled with an enthusiastic audience singing along with them.

The Cynffig Comprehensive annual Christmas concert with carols and readings was a most entertaining evening. The senior and junior choirs, along with 'Cynffig Only Boys Aloud', year-8 girls vocal group and year-11 vocal group (Kelsie Dewar, Leah Fox and Emily Jehu) were in fine voice.

There were also superb solo vocal performances from Megan Sevens (year-7), Levi Jenkins (year-11), Daniel Hall, Callum Wright and Anthony Burnell (all from year-8), Emily Hatherley (year-11) and Rebecca and Charlotte Coleman (year-7).

Other outstanding performances during the evening were given by Stevie Fedyszyn on Saxophone, Lucy McArthur (year-9) for her piano solo and Bethany Browning (year-11) for her vocal/guitar solo.

All the singers were accompanied on the piano by former pupil and accompanist to the Kenfig Hill and District Male Voice Choir, Andrew Chinnock.

The excellent school orchestra supported by Mrs E Noden (upper strings), Mr G Evans (lower strings), Mr M Haughey (brass), Mr C Collins (woodwind), Mr D Jefferies (guitar), Mr H Griffiths (percussion) and Mr A Williams (French horn) under musical directors Mr J Whatley and Miss N John and assistant musical director Miss C Thomas completed a brilliant evening of song and music.

During the evening, there were readings in Welsh and English from Bradley Harris (head boy), Isobel Downs (head girl), Kelly Charles, Dafydd Park, and headteacher Mrs Sue Davies.

Final concert
IT was a poignant evening for headteacher Sue Davies when she compered the Christmas concert at the school.

It was her last public engagement before leaving to take up a new post in Aberdare next spring to oversee the development of a new super school.

Sue said that she was sad to be leaving, but was proud of what has been achieved during her six years at the school.

She had praise for the amazing team around her saying that with their help they had been able to take the school to the ranking of the best school in the county borough. The school's deputy head, will be acting head, with Mr Nick Huxley as her deputy.

formances from Megan Sevens (year-7), Levi Jenkins (year-11), Daniel Hall, Callum Wright and Anthony Burnell (all from year-8), Emily Hatherley (year-11) and Rebecca and Charlotte Coleman (year-7).

Other outstanding performances during the evening were given by Stevie Fedyszyn on Saxophone, Lucy McArthur (year-9) for her piano solo and Bethany Browning (year-11) for her vocal/guitar solo.

All the singers were accompanied on the piano by former pupil and accompanist to the Kenfig Hill and District Male Voice Choir, Andrew Chinnock.

The excellent school orchestra supported by Mrs E Noden (upper strings), Mr G Evans (lower strings), Mr M Haughey (brass), Mr C Collins (woodwind), Mr D Jefferies (guitar), Mr H Griffiths (percussion) and Mr A Williams (French horn) under musical directors Mr J Whatley and Miss N John and assistant musical director Miss C Thomas completed a brilliant evening of song and music.

During the evening, there were readings in Welsh and English from Bradley Harris (head boy), Isobel Downs (head girl), Kelly Charles, Dafydd Park, and headteacher Mrs Sue Davies.

Final concert
IT was a poignant evening for headteacher Sue Davies when she compered the Christmas concert at the school.

It was her last public engagement before leaving to take up a new post in Aberdare next spring to oversee the development of a new super school.

Sue said that she was sad to be leaving, but was proud of what has been achieved during her six years at the school.

She had praise for the amazing team around her saying that with their help they had been able to take the school to the ranking of the best school in the county borough. The school's deputy head, will be acting head, with Mr Nick Huxley as her deputy.

GEM NOTE: Mrs Davies was awarded the OBE in the New Year's Honours (see page 1 story).

Pupils' awards
MANY congratulations



CYNFFIG HEAD'S LAST CONCERT:
Mrs Maxine Simpson (chair of governors); Sue Davies (headteacher); Mrs Hannah Castle (deputy head); and Nick Huxley.

to the following pupils at Mynydd Cynffig Junior School who were nominated for impressing staff at the school during their last week of the year:

Sofia Evans - Class 1, Morgan Rees - Class 2, Cerys Brinkworth - Class 3, Lauren Howe - Class 4, Ewan Orchard - Class 5, Ewan Davies - Class 6 and Charlotte Roberts - Class 7. On this occasion the Headteachers Award went to the school choir.

The school choir also joined Mr Davies for a special lunch during the last week of the term as a reward for the pupils' commitment and outstanding performances throughout the month of December.

In total, the choir performed on seven separate occasions including two Sunday services. Headteacher, Mr N Davies said that recognition for the pupils' hard work and dedication is thoroughly deserved.

He also thanked parents and grandparents for their continued support for the choir and to Miss Brace for the fantastic work she has put in with these pupils.

Chair AGM
GIVING his annual report in December, Chairman Harold Phillips of Kenfig Hill and District Male Voice Choir, on behalf of the committee, thanked the members of the choir for the opportunity to administer their affairs for the coming year and for their support, as without it the job would be impossible.

He said that David Denley and Mark Blight had joined the 2012 committee and both have taken up various duties with enthusiasm.

He went on to thank the choir's two principal officers, secretary Don Daniel and treasurer Gwyn Hodges as it is due to the attention to detail by these two that the affairs of the choir are in impeccable order.

This year, he would like to pay a special tribute to their choir librarians, Clive Langdon, as it is impossible to imagine how much time it takes to prepare the music folders.

Last summer, Clive gave each member a folder of 28 pieces of music, over 4,000 sheets printed on both sides and in many cases painstakingly taped together.

Harold also wanted to acknowledge the hard work by Johnnie Downs in compering, Robert Tremlett for his solos, Gary Downs and his team for running the 400 Club, and Bev Downs for his part in the social evenings. He also thanked all those who acted as porters with the keyboards, etc.

On behalf of the choir he passed on a big thank you to Philip Juliffe, Andrew Chinnock, Beryl Evans, Geraint John and Kathryn Brace.

Harold pointed out that they now have two junior choirs, Crescendo and Da Capo, both of which are performing to a very high standard. They were indebted to Kathryn Brace, who is musical director to both choirs, and to the members of the male voice choir music team who assist her.

Looking back through the records, he said that he reported in 2004 that membership numbers were continuing to fall and were down to 57. However, they were now bucking the trend for male voice choirs and membership was back to 71, with three new members serving their probation period.

He was also pleased to report that during the year they had welcomed five new choristers; Doug Roberts, Nigel Downs, Gareth Brace, Robert David and Teveita Manastava.

He went on to say that the loyalty shown by all the long term members must prove that they are doing something right.

The number of members with 25 years service has been increased by two with Robert Tremlett and Idris Jenkins bringing the total to 28.

Also Gary Hooper and Ken Grabham have joined the ranks of life members, after serving for 30 years - saying that it gave him great pleasure to ask their president to present them with their badges.

He concluded by saying he was honoured to be chosen as chairman for another year.

Swimmers flock to the cold sea for their traditional Porthcawl Christmas morning

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1)

IT was another successful Christmas Morning Swim in Porthcawl, as the event notched up its 48th year, on a mild day when the swimmers were spared the icy-cold winds that can make the event a really bracing experience!



ABOVE: Leon Marks (centre) brought daughters Romy and Nikki over from Luxembourg to do the swim, and they were joined by his brother, Ross, and father, James.



ABOVE: The Mayor of Bridgend county borough, Coun Marlene Thomas, needed to keep her chain of office dry when she entered the water!



PHOTOGRAPHS BY
**MALCOLM
NUGENT**



ABOVE: As the song say... 'Five Gold Rings!'



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BRYNGARW VICTORIAN CHRISTMAS IS A HIT!



ABOVE: Victorian fairground rides were among the attractions for families to enjoy at the 'A Victorian Christmas' event at Bryngarw.

HUNDREDS of people experienced a taste of what Christmas was like 100 years ago at Bryngarw House and Country Park.

Despite poor weather conditions, 'A Victorian Christmas' gave families, couples and friends an opportunity to enjoy a variety of yuletide activities with a historical twist.

Victorian-themed entertainment was on hand, including authentic rides and stalls, storytellers, a barrel-organ playing festive favourites, a brass band

and a carol concert with complimentary mince pies and mulled wine.

Children enjoyed visiting Father Christmas in his grotto and sharing their Christmas wishes with him, and the Pick 'n' Mix Circus were on hand to entertain the crowds and give children a chance to brush up on their circus skills.

New to this year's event was a Christmas market featuring a variety of locally produced foods and crafts for visitors to browse and buy.

And in addition to the seasonal delights being served at the

event's stalls, including hot chestnuts and toasted marshmallows, Bryngarw House's Harlequin Restaurant and the park's new visitor centre were also kept busy selling a variety of hot drinks and snacks.

Coun Lyn Morgan, BCBC cabinet member for wellbeing, said: "This was a wonderful, Christmassy event and I'd like to say thank you to everyone involved in making it happen."

"The weather was also very seasonal, but it's good that people weren't put off and were able to enjoy it with their families."

Smart school launches new app



Pictured above, left to right: Cara-Mae, Dafydd, Sion and Rose show off Llangewydd's new app with Mr Smith.

THE days of rummaging through children's school bags for letters have come to an end for parents and carers of children at one Bridgend county borough school.

Llangewydd Juniors has become the first school in the borough to launch its own smartphone app, which has been designed to help parents and carers stay in touch with the school and remember important dates, news and events.

Available on iPhone, Windows and Android devices, the app enables parents to quickly look up term dates and parent evening appointments, as well as school news, announcements and other general information. And with event dates included, there should be no excuse for pupils to forget their kit on sports day!

Parents and carers can use the app to communicate directly with the school, with the ability to comment on the app's news stories also available.

Coun Huw David, BCBC's cabinet member for children and young people, said: "The school has found a great way to use technology to conveniently interact with parents and carers."

Traders' awards

WINNERS of the 2012 Bridgend Town Council window dressing competition were as follows:

Shops: Ella Riley's Sweet Shop, Nolton Street; Eclectic Vintage Boutique, Dunraven Place; Townsend Florists, Queen Street; and Ty Hafan Store, The Rhiw Centre.

Rhiw market stalls: Peter Wood and Sons Butchers; Daffodil Gifts.

Presentations were made by the Mayor of Bridgend Town Council, Coun Roger Marsh at the Town Council Chamber, Glanogwr, off Merthyr Mawr Road, Bridgend.

"Lots of mums, dads and carers will already use smart phones, so this is tapping into that trend."

Headteacher Sue Davies added: "No longer will parents need to search through school bags, behind sofas or on the fridge door for the slip or letter outlining the 'back to school' day, the information will now be automatically on their mobile."

To find out more, contact the school on 01656 815530.

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Hardy swimmers head for the water as Porthcawl celebrates at Christmas!

SWIMMERS headed for the water in their hundreds on Christmas morning in Porthcawl – and there was a huge range of costumes on show.

A warm Santa Claus outfit was one option, while there were far more elaborate fancy dress creations on show.

However, there were also plenty of swimmers who braved the elements by racing across the sand clad simply in their summer swimming costumes!

(See more pictures by Glyn Evans on page 40).

PHOTOGRAPHS by GLYN EVANS

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BUMPER FUNDRAISING WEEK FOR FRIENDS OF ST JOHN'S SCHOOL!

THE Friends of St John's School had a record fundraising week recently – when they raised £4,647 in six days!

The major contribution came from their black tie Christmas ball, held at The Grove Golf Club, Porthcawl, where Mr Andrew Thomas of HRT, Cowbridge conducted a highly entertaining auction!

Mrs Catherine Perkins (chairperson of the Friends) said the event was a pleasure to organise as there was such wonderful support from parents, staff and friends of the school.

Other fundraising events in the same week included raffles held at the school's Nativity concerts and the annual festive bazaar, when Father Christmas came to visit and there were bargains and goodies galore!



Matthew (9) wins BCBC card competition



BUDDING young artist Matthew Willis helped the county borough have a cleaner and greener Christmas!

The nine-year-old, a pupil at Cwmfelin Primary School in Maesteg, designed the winning entry for Bridgend County Borough Council's Christmas card containing recycling information for the festive season.

His cheerful design showed Santa passing by planet Earth with the message 'reduce, reuse and recycle'.

The card, made out of recycled paper, was sent to every household in the bor-

ough to help residents understand their arrangements over Christmas and New Year.

Matthew and runners up Megan Lewis (Cwmfelin Primary), Molly Francis (Penybont Primary), Katie Jane Bennett (Penybont Primary), and Lola Warlow (Nottage Primary), were invited to a special presentation in the Mayor's parlour, where he received his first prize of a £25 voucher, a CD and a pencil case and goodies made from recycled materials.

Mayor of Bridgend county borough, Coun Marlene Thomas, said: "We had some wonderful entries but Matthew's was especially eye-catching."



Pencoed company gives the Heronsbridge School a boost

IWAN THOMAS, the former European and Commonwealth 400m relay champion, presented a cheque totalling £10,828 to Heronsbridge School at a special ceremony held recently at Ortho Clinical Diagnostics (OCD) in Pencoed, part of the Johnson & Johnson Family of Companies.

The money was raised by OCD employees who took part in the 'Legacy Challenge', a Johnson & Johnson UK company-wide event to raise funds for local charities at each of the company's 10 sites.

From September 24 to October 11, employees ran or cycled 996 miles in relay from the company's Inverness site in Scotland to Pinewood in England.

Meanwhile, employees at the 10 sites tackled their own activities, including baking and dancing competitions, and quizzes and raffles.

In total, £61,000 was raised for 10 local charities who were all present at the ceremony to receive their cheques.



Iwan Thomas with Heronsbridge pupils.

ny to receive their cheques.

Heronsbridge School was chosen by OCD as their charity, building upon the strong partnership which they had developed with the special needs school over the last two years.

The partnership has supported the development of several initiatives during this time and has been instrumental in supporting pupils to develop their skills in IT and communication, by providing the school with a set of much used iPads.

In addition, the company has also become involved in the

school's International Links programme, and has helped to build a garden in their orchard.

The £10,828 raised from this Legacy Challenge will be used by the school to build an all-weather sports pitch for the children. Fourteen employees from OCD cycled 150 miles from their Welsh site to Maidenhead in England to raise the money, supported by lots of on-site activities from their colleagues.

Mrs Glynis James, the headteacher at Heronsbridge School, said: "I am so delighted to receive this cheque. Currently, we do not have an outside

multi-purpose, all weather area which the children can use for activities and sporting events. I am so grateful to OCD and Johnson & Johnson for helping us. It will mean so much to the children and their families."

Several of the children attended the ceremony and the school choir welcomed guests, including the Mayor of Bridgend.

Iwan Thomas said: "It is so important for children to engage in sports and team activities."

"I am thrilled to be able to present this cheque to Heronsbridge School

and, of course, the cheques to the other nine well-deserving charities."

Rhoda Steel, corporate social responsibility leader at Johnson & Johnson UK, commented:

"We take our community and social responsibility seriously at Johnson & Johnson and the aim of the Legacy Challenge was to raise money for 10 local site charities."

"Everyone has gone above and beyond to support their legacy charity partner and we hope the money raised will make a real difference to many young people."

THE BUSINESS FORUM LOOKS BACK ON 2012

Representatives from almost 100 local businesses gathered to celebrate their achievements in 2012 at the Bridgend Business Forum's Christmas lunch.

Forum members and honorary guests met at the Coed-y-Mwstwr Hotel in Coychurch, where there was live music from Masquerade and entertainment from guest speaker Chris Corcoran, a teacher turned stand-up comedian and broadcaster, affectionately known as 'Korkey', who co-hosts a popular Saturday morning radio show with Rhod Gilbert.

Among the dignitaries at the event were Alison Hoy and Ian Jessopp, chair and vice-chair of the Bridgend Business Forum, Mayor Marlene Thomas and her consort, George Davies, chief executive of Bridgend County Borough Council Darren Mephem and council leader Mel Nott.

Chair Alison Hoy thanked guests for their support of the Bridgend Business Forum over the past year and highlighted some key achievements of the forum, and



ABOVE: Chris Corcoran at the business event

a collection in aid of the mayor's charity appeal fund raised £567 for Emmaus South Wales, the Stroke Association, Breast Cancer at the Princess of Wales Hospital and Bridgend Riding for the Disabled.

The event was sponsored by Bridgend Business Forum members, United Graphic Design and kksolutions. Leader Mel Nott said: "I know that considerable time and effort goes into the planning and delivery of this event, and I am very proud of all the council staff involved in making it such a success."

"This event is very well placed to continue to strengthen the excellent links which have already been established between the council and

the private sector in Bridgend. County Borough through the work of the Bridgend Business Forum."

Ian Jessopp, managing director at kksolutions, said: "Today has been a thoroughly enjoyable occasion. Chris Corcoran is an excellent speaker and a very funny man. kksolutions has been very proud to support the forum's Christmas lunch event for the past four years, and each year the bar is raised another notch."

"Well done to the whole team at Bridgend Business Forum for yet another superbly organised event. We are looking forward to seeing who next year's guest speaker will be!"

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CHOIR'S CONCERTS

Côr Meibion Cwm Garw (Garw Valley male choir) performed in a series of concerts last month, starting with the Christmas service in St Cein's Church, Llangeinor.

This was enjoyed by a capacity congregation who joined in the carol singing. The director of music, Bryan Young, said: 'Join in, please, and I'll be listening out for any promising tenors to enter into our ranks in the New Year!'

The programme was of seasonal content and included, 'It was on a Starry Night', 'Mary's Boy Child', 'Come and Join the Celebration' arranged by choir accompanist Margaret Rich.

The evening was completed with an 'oldy-wyn' in the Llangeinor Arms, kindly hosted by Kevin and Carolyn, who very generously laid on a delicious seasonal finger buffet and mulled wine that spurred the choir and guests on to a fine and rousing sing-song-along.

The matinee concert in the Glanrhyd Church on December 13 was a welcome return by the choir, which had not appeared at the church for four years and the Christmas Service was enjoyed by a very appreciative audience who delighted in joining the choir in traditional Christmas carols.

On December 14, the choir made its first appearance in the Oaklands Road Residential Home, Bryntirion, where they were warmly welcomed by residents and staff.

Afterwards, everyone was rewarded with a delicious finger buffet, generously and expertly prepared by the staff.

CAROL SERVICE

THE Annual Garw Valley Christmas carol service in St David's Church, Pontycymer on December 17 was introduced by the Rev Roger Pitman, who has just joined the community as the Rector of the Churches of St Cein's and St David's in the Parish of Llangeinor and the Garw Valley.

The concert began with two songs from the Côr Meibion, including the hand-clapping, foot-stomping 'When the Saints Go Marching In' followed by the delightful and talented Miss Phoebe-Ann Lewis with 'Rhywle Draw Dros yr Enfy's' the Welsh language setting of the famous theme song from the film *The Wizard of Oz*.

Then the Blaengarw School Choir took the

stage with two up-beat Christmas favourites 'Santa Claus is Coming to Town' and 'Rocking Around the Christmas Tree'.

Phoebe-Ann was then joined by Côr Meibion Cwm Garw for the very popular Caryl Parry-Jones' Christmas Song 'Nadolig Llawn i Chi Gyd'.

Following a short interval where mince pies and mulled wine were generously offered by the ladies of St. David's Church, the school choir enchanted all with 'Away In a Manger' and 'We Wish You a Merry Christmas' - and the evening continued with performances by Phoebe-Ann and the male choir. A wonderful evening's entertainment was rounded off with the communal singing of 'Hark, the Herald Angels Sing'.

CANDIDATES BECAUSE OF the passing away of Coun Pat Penpraze, the Plaid Cymru party in Bryncoch ward have selected Mr Tim Thomas to stand in the forthcoming election for a new councillor.

TONDU PRIMARY SCHOOL CHOIR
I WOULD like to congratulate the choir of Tondud primary school.

NORTH BRIDGEND NEWS

A message for all readers in the north of Bridgend who would like to have items included in the community news columns of The GEM:

If you wish to submit reports on any social activity in this region, please contact me.

I am very approachable and will endeavour to include every newsworthy subject.

Contact details: **CLIVE MITCHELL**

1 Tyn-Y-Coed Close, Sarn, Bridgend CF32 9NQ

TEL: 01656 725399

email: tyncoed1@yahoo.co.uk



It has sung at a number of venues performing its Christmas repertoire, including the Designer Outlet Centre at MacArthur Glen, entertaining former Welsh rugby international players at the Marriott Hotel, Cardiff, and the old age pensioners in the Len Evans centre, Aberkenfig.

The children also sang in the community carol concert at Tondud Wesley Methodist church.

On Thursday, December 13, the choir appeared in a performance at the Coychurch Memorial Hall. The following day the pupils sang to the elderly residents of Glan Yr Afan Nursing Home, and also to councillors and council officers at the Civic Offices on Monday, December 17.

The climax of the Christmas period was when the children took part in a 'Carols for Christmas' concert at St David's Hall, Cardiff, to

help raise money for the BBC's Children in Need appeal. For this concert, the choir performed with the BBC Chorus. The concert was broadcast on BBC Wales on Christmas Eve at 9am and on Christmas Day at 5pm.

Mrs Susan Pilcher, the headteacher, has thanked the choir's musical director Miss Handley, music teacher Mrs Lewis and teacher Mr Sullivan for all the hard work and encouragement they have given the children in the choir, which has been a credit to the school.

SCHOOL NEWS
MRS Susan Pilcher would like to congratulate the following children who took part in the annual Newcastle Higher Community Council design of a Christmas card competition, and who were prize winners in the various sections.

The infants' first prize went to Alivia Thomas-

King, and in second was Owain Hopkins, and third was Emily Williamson.

The juniors' first prize went to Dewi Gronow, with Sophie Andrews second, and Benji Lock in third. She was pleased that the school was also the overall winner of the competition among schools in the area, and Dewi Gronow was the overall winner and his design is on the greeting cards which the Council has printed.

Mrs Pilcher is also asking for donations of any toy animals, puppets, soft toys and books which will be useful for the children whose topic next term will be a 'Mini Zoo'.

She would also appreciate donations of small toy digging tools which the children can use in the outdoor garden.

CAROL CONCERT

I HAD the pleasure of attending the recent



W1 members at the concert in Tondud Methodist Church.

community Christmas carol concert at Tondud Methodist Church.

Three different choirs were taking part: the church choir, Brynmynyn Primary School Choir and Tondud Primary School Choir.

It was lovely to see that the congregation was larger than expected, that the adjacent hall had to be opened with additional seating to accommodate everyone.

Talking to the Rev Gordon Solis, I was surprised to be informed that many children in local schools had never been in a church building before this concert.

There were readings by congregation members, surprisingly one was of a poem by Dylan Thomas.

The church choir had a difficult task of com-

peting with the children in the choirs of the primary schools, but it was nice to have a variation of types of music.

The choir pleased the congregation with its version of 'Hear my prayers all tender love'; Brynmynyn Primary School Choir sang 'Silent night' and the 'First Noel' without musical accompaniment, and Tondud Primary School Choir sang 'Mary had a baby, yes Lord'.

The congregation enjoyed singing the popular carol 'O come all ye faithful' etc.

The church was adorned with 12 Christmas trees which had been provided and decorated by various organisations in the community.

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Ty Hafan pantomime gives children a Christmas treat

CHRISTMAS in Ty Hafan children's hospice in Sully was a special time this year when staff put on a special panto for the families of young patients.

The panto season started at the beginning of December with two performances a week, and after each show, Santa arrived with a present for every child.

Other families were invited in to the hospice to watch the panto and join in with the festivities.

This year's production, entitled 'Xmas Factor' was written, directed and performed by the care team and featured

judges Snowman Cowell, Louis Walsh and Tulisa and was hosted by Dermot O'Leary.

'Contestants' included Robbie 'the Reindeer' Williams, Christmas Ga Ga, Jedward and no other than Elvis and the Elves.

In the story, Snowman Cowell discovers the singing talents of Snow White and hides her in a wardrobe, leaving Prince Charming to rescue her.

"Christmas can often be a very difficult time of year for the families we support, and we wanted them to have a great time," said Cath Thompson, the head of care.

"There is nothing more rewarding than seeing the smiles on the children's faces or families spending some quality time together."

Cath continued "Everyone at Ty Hafan would like to thank all our wonderful volunteers and supporters for everything they do for us, and we wish them a very happy New Year.

"Without them, Ty Hafan would simply not have been able to give some families in Wales a Christmas they deserved, as well as being able to continue that vital care and support throughout the year."

Visit www.tyhafan.org to see how you can help make a huge difference to those families' lives in 2013.



ABOVE: The main cast of the staff pantomime, 'Xmas Factor'.



Visitor Madison Stanger with a Snowman.



Santa's little helper, visitor Joseph Tyler (seven months).

Navy stalwart is honoured by Queen

A ROYAL Naval Reserve Officer from Barry has been recognised by Her Majesty the Queen in the 2013 New Year Honours list.

Lieutenant Commander Brian Meadows (59), a media operations officer at the Royal Naval Reserve Unit HMS Cambria, Sully, who is currently on detachment at the Navy Command Headquarters in Portsmouth, has been appointed as a Member of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire (MBE) in recognition of his outstanding performance throughout his service in both the Royal Navy and Royal Navy Reserve.



Brian Meadows.

Brian, who lives in Barry with wife Vicky and daughter Tamsin, has given almost 45 years of distinguished service in naval uniform, which has led to this recognition from the Queen.

On receiving news of his award, Brian said: "I was quite overwhelmed when I was informed. The Naval Service has been my life, it has made me the person I

am today and I am so grateful to have had the opportunity to serve for so long." Brian joined the Royal Navy in 1968 as a boy signalman and has served in a variety of ships and shore establishments all over the world.

A very keen sportsman, he switched career paths to become a Physical Training Instructor (PTI) and was subsequently selected for a Commission and Officer Training.

This time last year, Brian was serving with the United States Second Marine Expeditionary Force in Helmand Province, Afghanistan. He has also completed operational tours in Northern Ireland, Iraq and Bahrain.

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Looking back on a very lively year!

Newspapers and TV schedules will be full of reviews of 2012 and its key events... From the Diamond Jubilee to the Olympics, there has been no shortage of things to include.

I thought I would have a look back over the parliamentary year, by re-reading the weekly This Week in Westminster bulletins I send out to constituents who are on my mailing list.

I have used this column to set out some of the 2012 parliamentary highlights.

Space does not allow a detailed review, but 2012 was a busy year.

The House of Commons ruminated on all of the following – Scottish devolution, the Leveson Report, welfare reform, the Hillsborough Inquiry, multiple European summits, regulation of the banks, Syria, reform of the NHS, cuts to the legal aid budget, the unravelling of the March Budget (who could forget Pasty Tax, and Caravan Tax among

others?) and, of course, yet another failed attempt to reform the House of Lords

Finding a few small excerpts that sum up the year is extraordinarily difficult.

Debates on welfare reform, however, deserve particular attention.

During the debate on Welfare Reform Bill Labour MP, Dame Anne Begg said:

"It is not a lifestyle choice to be diagnosed with a progressive, debilitating condition."

"It is hard. It is difficult. Individuals in that position face enough prejudice in society already, probably from the employers who told them that they could no longer do their jobs."

"That is why they need to apply for and claim benefit: because they have already faced that prejudice, which the Government may be making even worse."

"It is hard for those people, and we are making it harder."

One of the most moving speeches of the year was made by Conservative MP, Charles Walker, during a debate on mental health.

His frank admission

WESTMINSTER NOTEBOOK

Bridgend MP MADELEINE MOON writes an exclusive column from Westminster for GEM readers.



about his own mental health problems broke new ground:

"I am delighted to say that I have been a practising fruitcake for 31 years."

"It was 31 years ago at St John's Wood tube station—I remember it vividly—that I was visited by obsessive compulsive disorder."

"Over the past 31 years, it has played a fairly significant part in my life. On occasions, it is manageable and on occasions it becomes quite difficult."

"It takes one to some quite dark places. I operate to the rule of four, so I have to do everything in eights. I have to wash my hands four times and I have to go in and out of a room four times."

"My wife and children often say I resemble an extra from 'Riviera' as I bounce in and out of a room, switching lights off four times."

"Woe betide me if I switch off a light five times, because then I have to do it another

three times. Counting becomes very important."

My own contributions have included speeches on polycystic kidney disease, police investigation of suicides, defence reform, credit unions, Leveson and questions on topics ranging from the way people with learning disabilities are treated by the medical profession, changes made to export licences that were causing one local company immense difficulties, the impact of benefit cuts for carers, closure of Remploy factories, access to transport for the disabled, Armed Forces Day, Afghanistan and the sexual abuse of children.

There were some small, but significant victories... The Government was forced to abandon plans not to appoint the Chief Coroner.

The opportunity to reform the antiquated coronial system has not been lost. There was also a reprieve for the

debates in the chamber when Stephen is on his feet; if only to see where his eloquence will take him next.

Lilian Greenwood (Nottingham South, Labour):

"Does my hon. Friend agree that one of the deepest problems with this Bill is that the people's voice has not been heard?"

"These proposals were never put before the people in party manifestos. That is exactly why they feel so very angry."

Stephen Pound (Ealing North, Labour):

"I am grateful to my hon. Friend for her question. It is a great sadness and reflects ill on my personal life that I spend many a night browsing through

Liberal Democrat and Conservative manifestos."

"I have searched; I have examined; I have deconstructed; I have applied the principles of Jacques Derrida to those manifestos."

"Have I found in there any smidgen, any suggestion, any hint or any implication that the NHS was to be fragmented, privatised and ultimately destroyed, and the connection between the people and the NHS to be ripped up, torn into shreds like the integrity of the Liberal Democrats, hurled from the window of history, never, ever to be seen again?"

"Had I found that, I would almost certainly have voted Labour—but

as I did so, anyway, that is neither here nor there."

"But the point that my hon. Friend makes is absolutely right. How can the people, who fund the NHS, who are born in the NHS, who live in the NHS and who will ultimately quit this mortal bourn in the NHS—when they depart this vale of tears, it will be with the comforting arm of the NHS about their shoulders—feel that they are best served by this organisation if their voice is not heard?"

Anyone can receive a copy of my weekly review of events at Westminster by emailing my office on Moonm@parliament.uk. **Have a wonderful 2013.**

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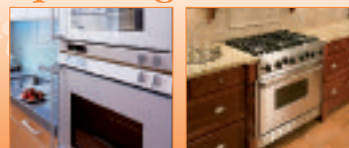
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TRACTOR BOYS OF ABERTHIN DO A GREAT WELSH CAUSE PROUD!

On December 27, the Tractor Boys of Aberthin, in conjunction with Three Horse Shoes, Peterston Super Ely, held another vintage tractor road run in aid of Velindre Cancer care unit Whitchurch.

Starting off from Llanerch Vineyard, Hensol at 10.30am, there were 23 tractors and a few 4x4s.

They travelled through Miskin, Pontyclun and Brynsadler before turning off and heading for Welsh St Donarts and Peterston Super Ely.

Many thanks to all those who supported this very worthy cause via donations, raffle prizes or participation.

A total of £350 was raised at the event.

Special mention goes to Llanerch Vineyard for allowing us to use their facilities and to our lunch time hosts, Digby and Jennie Rees of The Three Horse Shoes Public house.

JW

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*'Too many of you,
too few of us...'*

I DID enjoy Colin Dudley's poem 'Passing Time' published recently in The GEM.

Here is one of the poems I wrote many years ago which is still quite topical:

OUR NURSES

What do you see, you ask, what do you see?

Yes, we are thinking when looking at thee.

We may be hard, when we hurry and fuss

But there are many of you, and too few of us.

We would like for more time to sit by you and talk,

To bathe you, to feed you, to teach you to walk.

To hear of your lives, and the things you have done,

Your childhood, your husband, your daughter, your son.

But time is against us, there's too much to do,

Patients too many, and nurses too few.

We grieve when we see you so sad and alone,

With nobody near you, no friends of your own.

We feel all your pain, and know of your fear

That nobody cares now, that your end is near.

But nurses are people with feelings as well,

And when we're together, you often hear tell

Of the very old granny in the very end bed,

And the lovely old man and the stories he's said.

We speak of compassion, and love and feel sad,

When we think of your lives, and the joy that you had.

When the time has arrived for you to depart,

You leave us behind with an ache in our hearts.

When you sleep the long sleep,

No more worry or care,

There are patients waiting and we must be there,

So please understand when we hurry and fuss,

There are too many of you, and too few of us.

GEM reader W James, Barry.

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Litchard headteacher receives MBE honour

A headteacher who lives in Cowbridge has been awarded the MBE in the New Year's Honours for services to education.

Terry Williams (pictured right) who has been head at Litchard Primary School in Bridgend since the year 2000, announced his retirement last summer.

He told The GEM that he had no idea how he had come to be nominated, but he felt that his work with the National Association of Head Teachers (NAHT) in Wales may have been a factor. He was president of NAHT Cymru in 2010/11.

Another factor may well have been that Terry Williams has spent a long time in the schools where he has been a head. In a teaching career spanning 40 years, 23 have been as a head, at two local schools.

He was headteacher at Garth Primary in Maesteg for 11 years, and at Litchard for 12. In his time at both schools, he oversaw the process of merging an infants school with a junior school to create a single primary school.

Born in Trimsaran and a fluent Welsh speaker, he went to teacher training college in Cardiff, but then left Wales for his first teaching job.

He said: "It was in the East End of London, at Downell Road Junior in Leyton. When I took the children to play games, the sports fields were where the Olympic Stadium now stands!"

It was while teaching in London that he met his wife Jane, a Londoner who was also a teacher. After four years, the couple decided to come to Wales and bought a house in Cowbridge – and have never left.

In the 1980s, after school he was the warden at Cowbridge Youth Centre, and often sees local people who used to come to the centre when they were young.

Terry's first two teaching posts were in Llantwit Fardre and Pentyrch. Jane also continued to teach, and she recently finished her teaching career at Bute Cottage Nursery, Penarth, where she was acting head.

Terry Williams' career has been marked by occasions when he has been seconded to other duties. The first occasion was when he lectured at UWIC (now Cardiff Met) and then, during his time at Garth Primary, he was seconded to a team that had been put together to

tackle problems at another school in the borough. Soon after, he took up his post at Litchard Junior School and, after several years, he was seconded to Estyn to work on projects involving the inspection system.

After this secondment, he returned to Litchard as head of the infants school, as his deputy, Jeremy Phillips, was settled as acting head of the juniors.

When the schools were merged, Mr Williams took over as

head, and to complete the circle, now that Mr Williams has retired, Mr Phillips has taken over as head of Litchard Primary School.

Terry Williams says he is most proud of his time at Litchard. He said: "I was able to put together a really good team and we built the school together into a really good one. I am pleased to say that last year, we had an excellent inspection report."

He will not be totally leaving teaching behind,

as he intends to continue as a schools inspector, but on a part-time basis.

He is a strong supporter of present day teaching, and believes that the majority of schools are doing very well. He added: "I have personally worked with many very good teachers."

Teaching will still be a family topic. One daughter, Kathryn, is a teacher and the other, Sarah, is married to a headteacher, Steve Williams at Llangan Primary.

Retirement will mean



extra time for travelling, a chance for Terry and Jane to spend more time with their five grandchildren, and it will be a chance for Terry to improve his golf and learn a new sport – bowls.

He will also be continuing with his long-time love of choral singing, with the Cowbridge choir, Cor Meibion y Machlud.

PHILIP IRWIN

AM's praise for YMCA



ABOVE: Suzy Davies (left) with John Berry and Vicky Thomson of Porthcawl YMCA

SHADOW Welsh culture minister Suzy Davies has visited Porthcawl's newly-revamped YMCA.

Now known as Y Centre, the building in John Street has undergone a £600,000 upgrade which has given users new facilities, including a lift.

Ms Davies was escorted around by president John Berry who explained that the limitations of the site dictated what could be done.

He said: "We have a frontage onto John Street and have buildings either side of us."

"We had to make use of every inch, and we have built out over the yard at the back to maximise the space available."

Facilities now include a series of multi-purpose rooms including a craft room with a kiln where pottery classes are held; a

large conference hall – which can also be used for disco's or parties and a cafeteria.

Suzy Davies was amazed at the difference.

"The last time I was here, we were looking at a model of how the centre would look," she said.

"It was hard to imagine how it would actually be, but the reality is better than I expected. This is a building now fit for the demands of the 21st century."

"The YMCA has been in Porthcawl for the best part of a century and it is as relevant now as it ever was."

"I commend the hard work of the committee which set about raising the funding. They had the vision and the entire community in Porthcawl has benefited from it."

"I know that people of all ages use the building for their activities and it is truly a focal point for Porthcawl."

MORE BRIDGEND HONOURS

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1)

Wales rugby international and British Lion JJ Williams received the MBE for services to rugby and charitable work.

Terry Williams of Cowbridge, the headteacher at Litchard Primary, Bridgend, received the MBE for services to education.

Gareth Wyn Davies, formerly clerk to the Garw Valley community council, received the MBE for services to the community in the Garw Valley.

There was also an MBE for Bridgend Paralympic athlete Aled Sion Davies, for services to athletics.

Council Leader Mel Nott said: "Every year, I enjoy reading the moving stories of those people who have been honoured."

"I never thought for one moment that my name would ever

be on such a list, so this really is a humbling. To say I am shocked is an understatement!"

"Representing my community over the years has been a privilege and has been done entirely to try and improve lives, homes and opportunities for the people of Sarn and for Bridgend County Borough."

"I'm proud to accept this honour but do so on behalf of the community I serve, as well as for my wonderful wife and family who have always been such a support to me."

The Mayor of Bridgend County Borough, Coun Marlene Thomas, said: "I'm delighted to see so many people from Bridgend county borough recognised in this year's New Year Honours list; especially our own councillors Mel Nott and Wyn Davies, as well as the headteacher of Cynffig

Comprehensive School, Sue Davies."

"My most sincere congratulations to them all."

"For so many local people to be recognised on this year's list just goes to show what inspiring individuals we have living in our communities, and I'm looking forward to reading more about them as the nominations for the annual Mayor's Citizenship Awards start to come in."

"If you know someone that deserves a public 'well done' for doing something great for their community, there's still time to tell us about them – nominations are open until Friday, January 18."

For full details on the Mayor's Citizenship Awards, including a downloadable nomination form, visit www.bridgend.gov.uk or phone (01656) 643663.

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ADVERTISEMENT FEATURE

Education & Training

Music store has lots to offer

As everyone tries to anticipate what 2013 is going to bring, we at the Barry Music Shop are looking forward to all the new and exciting musical products that have been promised to us for 2013.

We have just had a delivery of brand new models of CORT acoustic small-bodied guitars which we are busy putting on our guitar wall for customers to see and try out.

The biggest change at the start of 2013, particularly of interest to singers and performers, is the fact that Ofcom have now withdrawn a huge amount of radio microphone frequencies in the 800Mhz band - meaning that it will no

longer be legal to operate those between 800 and 863Mhz. The only part of the 800Mhz band that you can still use is Channel 70, 863.100 - 865.00Mhz, which do not require a license.

The only alternatives are the new channel 38 frequencies 806 - 815Mhz which require a license, or you could go digital!

The Barry Music Shop stock world leading Line 6 Digital Radio Microphones, which offer improved quality and exceptional range, without the need for a license.

There are a few different models available from the entry level V35 handheld pack for £199 + VAT, right up to the advanced V75 version that even has microphone modelling technology that

can replicate many microphone styles.

These sell at £499.99 + VAT - but these are top range systems, cheaper than analogue equivalents by other well known manufacturers.

The added advantage with the digital radio microphone is that they sound exactly like a wired microphone without compressing the sound - for a demonstration, please call into the shop.

The team at JPL Sound and the Barry Music Shop would like to thank all customers and clients for their support during 2012, and look forward to welcoming new customers throughout 2013."

New courses for a new you!

CARDIFF and Vale College, one of the largest colleges in Wales, with ten sites across the region, is running dozens of new courses for pleasure, for work or for your business, starting from this January.

Courses for pleasure

If you're thinking of learning a new skill this year, or if you just want to have fun, Cardiff and Vale College is offering short courses in creative sub-

jects, including: jewellery making, circus skills, guitar skills, life drawing and scriptwriting.

The college is also offering cookery, parenting classes, languages, courses in using an iPod or smartphone and many others. Many courses run for 10 weeks and are just £60.

Courses for work

TO get ahead in your workplace, or keep up-to-date with legislation, the college is offering on-demand courses in specialist areas such as dementia awareness, Welsh for early years, BPEC gas safe, 17th edition wiring regs, SQL training,

webpage design, CILEX and other courses across many industries.

Courses for your business

If you're looking to train your workforce, there are a number of courses in subjects ranging from safeguarding to management training for IT managers, internet marketing, public speaking training, employment law, health and safety, and hair and beauty skills such as spray tanning, threading and men's grooming.

Visit: www.cavc.ac.uk/new-courses, or call 030 30 30 10 10.

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Kings Monkton will always be kept deliberately small. We have the advantages of a village school ethos in the heart of the capital and will deliver, as far as possible, a personalised education for your child, valuing achievement as well as attainment.

We pride ourselves on outstanding teaching

and learning and on excellent pastoral care. We believe in upholding traditional values – demonstrated in exemplary behaviour and standards of dress – while promoting innovation in the classroom.

At Kings Monkton, we endeavour to immerse children in an innovative curriculum to develop skills they can take with them to the next stage of their lives.

Teachers aim to make their lessons inspirational, challenging and accessible with teaching programmes that encourage pupils to innovate and inquire.

Our aim is for pupils to contextualise the reasons for their learning, helping them to make connections between what they are learning and how that knowledge can be used.

Cross-phase teaching allows primary pupils to be challenged and excited by the curriculum, resources and specialised classrooms of the secondary school, and throughout the school pupils recognised as more able and talented are offered imaginative opportunities to move into lessons in the year above.

Key Stage 2, GCSE and A-level maths can all be taken early, if appropriate.

Sports, drama and music and other extra-curricular activities are at the heart of the school, allowing children to contribute at levels in line with their ability, rather than their age. Duke of Edinburgh and Young Enterprise have also been developed to cultivate self-awareness, character and maturity.

Kings Monkton is well placed in an accessible city centre location to take advantage of the very best sporting facilities and many cultural experiences that Cardiff has to offer – and pupils enjoy a rich diet of visiting speakers, educational visits and experiences.

Above all, we believe that a successful school career is based on successful relationships: happy children are motivated children; motivated children will become successful, fulfilled adults.

We invite you to visit us and see for yourself.

There's always a reason to learn Welsh: What is your reason?

JEN's learning Welsh for little Gethin!

Jennifer Evans from Canton has recently started learning Welsh to communicate with her little boy, Gethin, and finds it's really useful and great fun.

She said: "It's lovely, because since starting the course we've begun reading Welsh books together and I've got some Welsh CDs that we sing along to. Also, the tutor has very creative and exciting ways of teaching which makes learning Welsh a lot of fun."

Jennifer's also planning on sending Gethin to a Welsh medium school and is aiming to be able to help her son with his homework.

Nick's learnt Welsh to socialise and for his

career

"I've been learning Welsh at my local Welsh for Adults Centre for a few years now. It's been very useful as I have many Welsh-speaking friends – so it's great to be able to communicate with them in the mother tongue. I've increasingly found it very useful in work as well".

Discover if you are entitled to any fee concessions: www.learnwelsh.co.uk/discover.

There's always a reason to learn Welsh. If you'd like to learn, please contact the Welsh for Adults Centre, Cardiff and the Vale of Glamorgan, on 02920 874710; info@learnwelsh.co.uk

Heart attack did not faze student Mark!

MARK THOMAS is celebrating, having beaten off thousands of hopefuls nationally to win the accolade of 'Student of the Year', as part of Pitman Training's Super Achievers Awards.

Mark (48) from Pontardulais, studied the Microsoft fast track office diploma at Pitman training, won the judges' hearts and minds, thanks to his commitment to personal development and training, which saw him get a new job after 20 years of being a bus driver.

He didn't even let "an unscheduled heart attack" get in his way! Mark made a full recovery and worked hard to complete the course, which has created a new job opportunity for him at Amazon, and has

shown him that there are new opportunities out there.

For more information, contact Melanie

or Katie at Pitman Training Cardiff on 02920 342020 or email cardiff@pitman-training.net.

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ADVERTISEMENT FEATURE Education & Training

Tutors hold key to a new career

THE saying 'You're never too old to learn' has never been more apt.

With people living far longer, there are compelling reasons why they might want to keep developing new skills – often with the expert assistance of experienced tutors.

We start learning as soon as we are born, but once we start at school, there are certain basic skills – they used to be summed up in the light-hearted phrase 'Reading, writing and 'rithmetic' – that youngsters must have at their disposal to have a successful career.

Parents have often turned to tutors for a period in their children's school career to bolster those three central pillars of learning.

Nowadays, the help provided by tutors has expanded into numerous areas.

It's not just the three Rs – youngsters can study languages, music, technology – on a one-to-one basis

with a tutor.

For those who have reached middle age and are made redundant, learning a new skill can open the door to a new career.

Studies have shown that in the course of a working life-time, some people have had to retrain up to four times!

The GEM recently carried the story of a local man who retrained in his 40s so successfully that he started a new career as an outside broadcast technician – and even worked on the BBC news coverage from the Olympics!

Even in old age, people are keen to tackle topics new to them – computer skills to help them communicate with family or help in everyday aspects of life, such as paying bills on-line or gaining a new language because new vistas of travel have opened up.

One example of a local octogenarian with an unquenched thirst for knowledge, is Sully's Eileen Younghusband, well known for her recent books describing her code-breaking work in the Second World War.

She completed a degree at the age of 87, and has now, at the age of 91, received a British Empire Medal for her services to life-long learning.

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'Life of Pi' adds up to a magical movie experience

DIRECTOR – with only a Bengal Tiger named Richard Parker for company...
Ang Lee has always been a thoughtful filmmaker, his meditative approach suiting dramas like *The Ice Storm* and *Brokeback Mountain*, and his latest film follows a similar tack, adapting Yann Martel's *Life of Pi*.

It tells the story of Pi (Suraj Sharma) who, when he survives a disaster at sea that sees his family and the animals they are transporting perish, finds himself thrust into an epic journey that sees him battle to survive and make his way home

– with only a Bengal Tiger named Richard Parker for company...

If the above synopsis seems a little scant then it's for good reason – that pretty much encompasses the story, which while brief, makes for a canvas that allows the reader, and in this case the viewer, to project themselves into the story.

Taking this and running with it, Ang Lee makes a film that is poetic, visually beautiful and hugely moving, *Life of Pi* a thoroughly incredible cinematic experience.

The director gives the film the most gorgeous visual style, creating a boldly colourful exercise in making the most of a cinema screen, and

throwing in some of the finest 3D work yet seen; it really is sensational looking, and the seamless effects work (is the tiger real or CGI? You decide!) just adds to the beauty of the film.

However, for all the visual beauty, the film is just as strong in terms of its narrative power, taking what appears on the surface to be a simple tale, but throwing in meditations on the nature of faith and fate, and how our lives fit into the wider world, Martel's prose is transformed incredibly well into what you see on screen and maintaining the book's core elements.

The changes that are made are there purely to

make the tale more cinematic, a framing device involving an older Pi and an intrigued author (beautifully performed by Irrfan Khan and Rafe Spall) cleaving not too far away from the book and works well, keeping the momentum of the story going, while a final reel reveal cleverly plays with your expectations.

While the performances across the board are pitched perfectly, the weight of the film rests squarely on the shoulders of Suraj Sharma, and the novice actor doesn't disappoint in a turn that is at times humorous, touching, starkly emotional and brave. It is a revelatory performance by the actor that takes away any

notion of the film not managing to engage due to the limited set-up of the story; much like Tom Hanks in *Castaway*, Sharma (with a little help from Richard Parker) is a beguiling, likeable and wonderful lead.

Ticking all the boxes, you won't find many more films as perfectly pitched as *Life of Pi*; giving you spectacular visuals, a heart-warming and wonderfully executed narrative, while asking pertinent questions about human nature. It really is an absolutely magnificent and awe-inspiring piece of work.

VERDICT – Simply sensational, *Life of Pi* is visually sumptuous, the best example yet of the



by GARETH JAMIESON

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power of 3D technology married to an emotionally engaging narrative. Ang Lee's direction is tender and beautiful and the performances are all excellent, doing Yann Martel's source novel justice in a fine adaptation. **MUST-see.**

SEE THIS IF YOU LIKED: *Castaway* (2000), *Brokeback Mountain* (2005)

Why do we celebrate on Twelfth Night?

JANUARY 6 marks the end of the Christmas festival and it is appropriately named Twelfth Night, because it brings a close to the 12 days of the festive period.

It is the date of the Epiphany on the Christian calendar, a night when the Three Wise Men visited baby Jesus in Bethlehem.

It's not to be confused with Shakespeare's comedy play of the same name (a piece that I studied for both O level and London Academy of Music and Dramatic Art) Twelfth Night has been celebrated over the course of time by many different traditions, but in most cultures it was a joyous occasion overflowing with food, drink, and merrymaking.

Superstition stated that all Yuletide trees and colourful decorations must be dismantled and put away before January 6, as it was deemed to be unlucky. Failure to obey the custom would bring misfortune and disaster into the lives of the defiant.

The superstition of dismantling all Yuletide decorations before Twelfth Night relates to Tree Spirits which were thought to live within the greenery of the Yule tree, holly and ivy.

All plant-life would have to be returned to its rightful place after the midwinter festival as people believed that spring would not return if the custom was not followed.

Natives also deemed the tree to be mischievous unless they returned it to its natural habitat.

Nineteenth century principles lure people to keep the holly, ivy, yew, and mistletoe within the household until February 2, which is Candlemass Day, the date that the infant Jesus was presented to the Temple.

This day was known as the Feast of Lights, because all greenery would be burnt on large bonfires to banish all evil.

During Tudor times, Twelfth Night commemorated the end of the winter festival which had commenced on All Hallows Eve, (Halloween) October 31. Even after such a lengthy time of merriment, Twelfth Night would be celebrated with the Lord of Misrule and other higher figures of society who traditionally exchanged places with the peasants of the land for the evening.

Large cakes containing a bean and a pea would be baked, and whoever was lucky enough to have these pulses in their slice of cake would be crowned King or Queen of the Feast. Also, the taking down of all decorations of holly, ivy, wreaths, fruits and nuts resulted in them being consumed by the King or Queen of the feast: but only until midnight as Christmas would then be officially over and everyone would return to normality.

A popular beverage to drink on this occasion was alcoholic punch called wassail. This was consumed along with Twelfth Night cake. The custom dates back to pre-Christian times when the

Celtic festival of Samhain and ancient Roman fiesta of Saturnalia were also observed.

The feast of the Epiphany was also known as Three Kings Day, the adoration of the magi or the Manifestation of God. The Three Kings travelled to worship the 'King of the Jews' by following a bright star to Bethlehem. They were from ancient Persia and were thought to have been Median Zoroastrian priests who were sent to present gifts to the baby Jesus of gold, frankincense and myrrh.

Today, the superstition of dismantling all decorations from the Christmas tree still remains, although many people are unsure of its origins. After clearing away the tinsel, it is then time to celebrate with food, drink and parties as Christmas is over for another year. Portcawl has been the centre of Twelfth Night festivities for many years with the bearing of fancy dress costumes and traditional dancing being the main themes.

In fact, my parents and their friends would attend parties each year (when my brother and I were small) at the now forgotten Manor Suite (at the entrance of the fairground) or the Stoneleigh Club which was situated in John Street, and sadly burnt down in the 1980s.

Legendary tales state that the ghosts of the deceased would emerge from beyond the grave on this night, transforming themselves into life-like apparitions. Séances would be performed to entice these spirits to notice the living.

This form of communication is known as necromancy. Magical rituals were also performed to entice the souls of the dead to visit the earth once more.

Sometimes January 5 is observed as Twelfth Night, when the phantom

image of a lady riding a grey horse has been witnessed. She seems to ride the planes of the countryside, only to disappear in a hazy mist. Could this unknown apparition be seen throughout the landscape of Wales?

Phantom armies are also reported to parade the roads of Wales as if in search of something or even someone, yet no sound is ever heard.

Spectral ships sail the seas on this entertaining night, and the frightful sound of ghostly trains chuff to a halt at invisible destinations. But can these eerie specters be tricks of the mind?

Only you can decide...
HAYLEY WILLIAMS
hayley.williams550@yahoo.co.uk

Vale residents in New Year's Honours list

A number of Vale residents received awards in the New Year Honours list.

Receiving the CBE was John Geraint Davies from Penarth, in recognition of his extensive charitable work in Wales, particularly in relation to Aberfan.

Eileen Younghusband of Penarth received the British Empire Medal for her services to lifelong learning. She obtained an Open University degree at the age of 87, and has gone on to write two autobiographies about her wartime experiences.

Justine Pickering, the founder of Ty Hapus, which has a base in Barry, received an MBE for services to people with dementia and for charitable work with the NSPCC.

Wales rugby international and British Lion JJ Williams received the MBE for services to rugby and charitable work.

Terry Williams of Cowbridge, headteacher at Litchard Primary, Bridgend, received the MBE for services to education.

Lt Cdr Brian Meadows received the Royal Navy MBE (See article on page 11).

New chapter for Dyffryn Gardens

A NEW chapter in the history of Dyffryn Gardens will start tomorrow (Friday, January 4).

The National Trust took over responsibility for the Grade II house and Grade I gardens on January 1 on a 50-year lease, although the Vale Council will retain ownership.

The gardens reopen to the public after the Christmas break on Friday, January 4, when there will be an official 'handing over' ceremony.

Justin Albert, the director of the National Trust in Wales, said: "Growing and shaping a glorious garden is a long-term project. The work done so far by all those involved with Dyffryn Gardens since its inception – the Cory family, Thomas Mawson, The Vale Council, Cadw and the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) – has produced an amazing site.

"The passion that has gone into creating Dyffryn Gardens over the years – from volunteers, staff and supporters – cannot be taken for granted. And we want everyone to join with us in harnessing that passion for a new stage of Dyffryn's journey.

"The National Trust is proud and honoured to be taking over stewardship of these magnificent gardens"

Coun Gwyn John, the Vale Council cabinet member for leisure, parks, culture and sports development, described the handover as an important move to

secure the future of the house and gardens, and said it was a boost for local tourism.

He said: "The council has undertaken a great deal of work to restore the house and gardens since acquiring the property in 1996. As well as restoring the gardens and glasshouses, we have developed excellent visitor facilities and done work to protect the fabric of the house.

"The property now has an exciting future as part of the National Trust's portfolio and we look forward to seeing the gardens and house developed further, which will benefit tourism in the Vale and secure the future of this important and historic estate.

"I'd like to thank all our staff who have worked on the project and the Heritage Lottery Fund for the support they have given us over the years. We look forward to a long and successful partnership with the Trust."

Jennifer Stewart, the head of the HLF in Wales, said: "Dyffryn House and Gardens is one of Wales's most significant heritage gems.

"We are delighted that the investment of more than £6 million of lottery funding will now be sustained through the expertise and experience of the National Trust.

"We will continue to work closely with the team at Dyffryn House and Gardens and the National Trust."

EGYPT TALK

THE next meeting of Dinas Powys Local History Society will be held on January 8, in Kynance Hall, at 7.30 pm, with an illustrated talk by Ron Powell on 'Egypt without Crowds'. An administration fee of £3 for non-members and £1.50 for members will be charged. All are welcome.

'Music in the Vale provides top-of-the charts young talent' – says the Vale AM

ONCE again, Music in the Vale has surpassed all expectations and given talented singers and musicians the opportunity to show their expertise at auditions, followed by a performance in front of a live audience.

Held at Cowbridge Comprehensive School on November 24-25, the adjudicators had a tough job deciding who to put through to the final concerts.

From the finalists who were chosen to perform on the stage on the Saturday, a worthy mention should be given to the winners of the vocal ensemble – a choir from St Illtyd's Primary School in Llantwit Major who sang with great enthusiasm. A loud shriek of joy was heard from the rear of the theatre when the results were announced.

Also worthy of mention were the runners-up in this category: A Cut Above, a group of sixth form singers from Stanwell School in Penarth. The talented group consisted of Zachary Ghazi Torbati, Joseph Ingram, Joseph Keenan and Luke Waddon, four boys who on the advice of their teacher formed this barber shop quartet specifically to enter the competition.

They have been inspired to continue performing together and are looking forward to the Glangfa Stage Performance opportunities at the WMC.

Penarth was very well represented by junior winner Manon Parry and finalist Llinos Haf Jones. The intermediate prizewinner was Jodi Bird, also from Penarth.

The winner of the most promising singer in the Vale was Huw Jones.

During the next day's performance for talented instrumentalists, one of the youngest was Jack Ollier from Barry, who entered the descant recorder, the piano and the clarinet.

He achieved his best result with the recorder and entertained the audience with style and confidence. Jack is one of the youngest competitors being just nine years old.

Longstanding supporter of Music in the Vale, Jane Hutt AM, thoroughly enjoyed the event: "Once again, the Music in the Vale volunteer organisers have excelled in giving opportunities to our talented young musicians to compete at the annual competition held at Cowbridge Comprehensive School.

"With singers, instrumentalists and ensembles competing over the weekend, the competitors and winners were top of the charts of young musical talent in Wales," she enthused.

One adjudicator summed up the event by saying: "I was so honoured to be part of your wonderful efforts encouraging the next generation of talent."

This year, for the first time ever, a young marimba player won the senior instrumental prize. Harriet Riley from Cardiff played her marimba in the individual category and she and Molly Lopresti, a vibraphone player, played a duet incorporating both instruments. They called themselves Malleticious, and were the winners of the instrumental ensembles. *To the individual talented musicians and singers who took part: well done, and come again next year.*

RESULTS

Singers:

Junior winner – Manon Ogwen Parry.

Junior runner-up – Nel Rhys Lewis.

Junior finalists – Llinos Haf Jones, Huw Jones.

Intermediate winner – Jodi Bird.

Intermediate finalists – Joseph Keenan, Joseph Ingram.

Senior winner – Heulen Cynfal.

Senior runner-up – Sarah Gifford.

Senior finalists – Gwenith Evans, Eleri Gwilym.

Vocal ensemble winners – St Illtyd's Primary

School Choir.

Runner-up – A Cut above.

Finalists – Cantemus, Junior Boys' Choir

Llandaff Cathedral School.

Most promising in Vale of Glamorgan – Huw Jones.

Instrumentalists:

Junior winner – Aisha Palmer (piano).

Junior runner-up – Lizzie Lovell-Jones (cello).

Junior finalists – Mireia Horner (harp), Jack

Ollier (descant recorder).

Intermediate winner – Charlie Lovell-Jones (violin).

Intermediate runner-up – Robin Tait (piano).

Intermediate finalists – Anwen Mai Thomas (harp), Toby Swann (piano).

Senior winner – Harriet Riley (marimba).

Senior finalists – Hannah Clist (cello), Joe Atkin-Reeves (saxophone).

Most Promising in Vale of Glamorgan – Hannah Clist (cello).

Instrumental ensembles: winner (£75) – Malleticious (marimba and vibraphone)

Runner-up (£50) – Brodys Richards (piano duet).



St Illtyd's School Choir, winners of the vocal ensemble prize.



Hannah Clist (cello), from Cowbridge, was the winner of the most promising instrumentalist living in the Vale.



The junior finalists with winners Manon Parry (back row), Huw Jones (centre) and Llinos Jones.



Malleticious – Molly (on left) and Harriet.



A Cut Above, from left: Zachary Torbati, Joseph Ingram, Luke Waddon and Joseph Keenan.



Manon Parry, junior winner.



Intermediate winner Jodi Bird from Penarth – with her proud dad.

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BIRDS of prey are special – not only to humans, but to the whole of the natural world.

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Sadly, there are still those who seem hell bent on destroying these magnificent birds.

Since 2006, there have been 2,578 incidents in the UK.

But there is something we can all do to help stop this by reporting incidents to the Police and the RSPB, and including as much information on the culprits as possible.

Coun Rob Curtis, Barry.

PACT meetings

CASTLELAND PACT: The Civic Offices, Holton Road, Barry on Monday, January 7 at 7pm.

CADOC PACT: Palmerston Community and Learning Centre on Wednesday, January 9 at 6pm.

BUTTRILLS PACT: The Philip John Community Room, Barry Library on Thursday, January 10 at 6.30pm.

DYFAN PACT: North Walk Community Centre on Sunday, January 13 at 7pm.

SULLY PACT: Jubilee Hall, Smithies Avenue, Sully on Thursday, January 10 at 8pm.

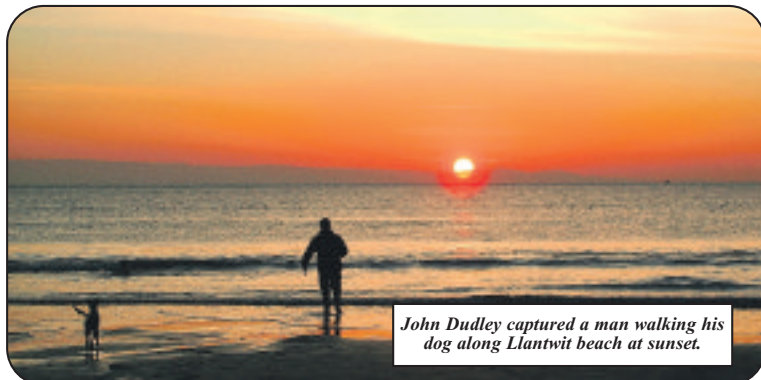
ST AUGUSTINES PACT: The Windsor Arms Public House, Windsor Road, Penarth on Wednesday, January 16 at 7pm.

LLANTWIT MAJOR PACT: Llantwit Major Leisure Centre on Wednesday, January 16 at 7pm.

RHOOSE PACT: The Community Centre, Celtic Way, Rhosce, on Thursday, January 17 at 7pm.

LLANDOUGH PACT: The Royal British Legion, Penlan Road, Llandoough, on Monday, January 28 at 7pm.

Vale's beauty captured by readers' cameras



John Dudley captured a man walking his dog along Llantwit beach at sunset.

THE GEM recently asked readers to submit their photographs showcasing the Vale's plentiful beauty spots.

This week, Paula James, who holds a database of thou-

sands of beautiful shots of the Vale, sent us a recent photograph taken at Rhose Point, the most southerly point in mainland Wales.

GEM reader John Dudley submitted this photograph of a man walking his dog along

Llantwit beach, while Barry Morgan provided a shot of a gorgeous sunset at Porthkerry Park, taken in November.

Keep your eyes peeled for more readers photos in future editions.



Paula James' shot of Rhose Point.



ABOVE: Barry Morgan's sunset at Porthkerry Park.

Shine a Light raises £10,000

ON December 6, the Marie Curie Hospice at Penarth invited people to shine a light on their Christmas tree, in memory of a loved one.

Despite heavy rain, over 200 people turned up in support of the

local hospice.

There was music, mulled wine and mince pies, people were invited to view their dedication cards that they had written in memory of their loved ones.

Entertainment was provided by local Welsh singer Bruce Anderson. A big thank you to all

the staff, volunteers and people who donated towards the raffle and the red wine.

The event raised over £10,000, to help staff at the hospice care for more terminally ill people at Christmas time.

Christmas at Holton Primary



JUNIOR pupils at Holton Primary School performed a unique musical concert called 'Christmas

Decades' to parents this festive season, whilst infant children hosted a traditional Christmas Nativity service.

The teaching and LSA staff performed in a spectacular end-of-year Nativity assembly that celebrated the true meaning of Christmas.

Holton Primary would like to thank all pupils, parents and friends for their continued support of our school.

AG

ABOVE: Curtain calls were the order of the day after spectacular end of year performances at Holton Primary School.

HISTORY TALK

COWBRIDGE and District Local History Society's next lecture will be on Friday, January 4 at 7.30pm in the Lesser Hall of the Town Hall, Cowbridge.

Brenda Youle will speak on the 2nd Volunteer branch of the Welsh Regiment. All welcome.

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Beautiful leather back traditional 3 seater sofa
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BONUS PRICE £699



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Paris small glass table and 4 chairs (large table shown)

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PETERSTON COMMUNITY ENTERS A PRE-CHRISTMAS FUNDRAISER!



A FUN RUN was held at Peterston-super-Ely on December 15 – to help fund the playstation planned to replace the ageing facilities on the community field.

There were five races round Wyndam Park, including a dog and owner race, a pram race and three age group races.

The large crowd was sustained by mulled wine, hot dogs – and goodies for the children!

PICTURES by
IAN DIXON



Former Assembly Minister succeeds Win as Trust chief

PROFESSOR Andrew Davies will take over as chair of Abertawe Bro Morgannwg University Health Board, succeeding Win Griffiths, who stood down on December 31, 2012.

The Welsh Government Health Minister, Lesley Griffiths, said: "I am extremely grateful to Win for his dedication and commitment to the NHS in Wales and would like to wish him all the best for his retirement."

"I am delighted that Andrew has decided to use his considerable skills and experience to contribute to the NHS in Wales."

"Andrew's experience will help us as we implement the changes necessary to meet those challenges, as outlined in our five-year vision for the NHS in Wales, Together for Health."

Andrew Davies has been appointed for three years and will receive £69,840 per annum for a time commitment of 15 days a month.

He is currently an honorary professor and strategic adviser to the Vice-Chancellor and senior management team at Swansea University.

In a voluntary capacity, he is the chair of the National Dance Company; a non-executive director and trustee of the Charity Bank, and chair of the Welsh Commission on Co-operatives and Mutuals.

Between 1999-2011, Andrew Davies was a member of the National

Assembly for Wales and a Welsh Government cabinet minister for over 10 years, including serving as Finance and Public Services Minister.

He holds no other ministerial public appointments.

Professor Davies said, "I am absolutely delighted to be appointed to this vitally important position by the Minister."

"I intend to build on the excellent work of my predecessor Win Griffiths, providing leadership at a time of major change for the NHS and other public services in Wales."

"We are faced with considerable challenges, but I am confident that working with a great team of healthcare professionals, local authorities, the third sector, Swansea University and other partners we will continue to develop excellent services for local citizens and communities."

However, the Conservative leader in the Welsh Assembly, Andrew RT Davies, was not impressed.

The South Wales Central AM said: "It's getting to the point where the public sector in Wales is starting to resemble a conveyor belt for has-been Labour politicians."

"These well-remunerated appointments don't appear to be part of any grand strategy, more a rite of passage to thank party apparatchiks for their loyal service."

"This is little more than rearranging the deck-chairs on the Titanic, albeit with large sums of public money," he asserted.

Assembly scheme to tackle child poverty in the area is extended

THE Vale and Bridgend county boroughs are to get their share of cash from a Welsh Government scheme to support families in disadvantaged areas

The Flying Start programmes in Barry and Bridgend county borough will benefit from almost £2.5 million capital funding aimed at parents who are struggling to cope with the pressures of poverty.

Bridgend county borough will get £1,823,531, while Barry receives

£663,985.

Flying Start is a Welsh Government programme which supports families with children up to four years old.

Since a pilot programme six years ago, it now operates in all 22 local authorities, with 18,000 children under the age of four, and their families, benefiting.

The programme includes free part-time childcare, parenting support, intensive health visitor support and support for early language development.

The Welsh Government intends to

double the number of children benefiting from Flying Start, from 18,000 to 36,000 by 2015, and plans to invest £19 million capital funding to develop the infrastructure needed in new areas.

Flying Start will expand over the next few years and will target specific communities in Bridgend county borough and Barry where there are high concentrations of families living on benefit.

The Deputy Minister for Children and Social Services, Gwenda Thomas, said: "Supporting children in the early years is a priority for the Welsh Government."

"We are prioritising early years support because we know that that is where we will make the most impact. We can make a real difference for children and families," she concluded.

'A Barry Boy' recalls the post-war years

A MAN who was born in Barry in 1941, has written a book about his childhood memories of growing up in the town.

Gareth Davies now lives in Swansea, but has a vivid recollection of what it was like in the immediate post-war era in Barry.

Among the aspects of life covered in *A Barry Boy* are family life, leisure activities, law and order, religion and health.

Mr Davies explained: "The book reflects a

slower, more basic way of life, with fortunately, great parents, a fine sister, and a generally happy upbringing."

"Each chapter is accompanied by relevant observations and anecdotes which reflect my experience of how life has changed in the last half century."

If people are interested in the book, Mr Davies is happy to send it out for a nominal charge. Please email gd@gdems.freemove.co.uk.

AM DROPS IN ON RENISHAW TO DISCUSS FUTURE PLANS

RIGHT: David Melding, Welsh Conservative AM for South Wales Central (second from right) is pictured with Chris Pockett (head of communications), Gareth Hankins (director of group manufacturing services division) and Allen Roberts, finance director.



RECENTLY, David Melding AM visited Renishaw plc at their base in Miskin, which was formally opened in October and is based at the former Bosch site.

Following a tour of the facility, David was briefed about their future plans, which will bring much-needed investment and new

jobs to the area.

He said: "This is a world class business and will bring much needed jobs to the local area. Their investment will not only be a great boost to the local economy, but will also be of great benefit to south Wales and the Welsh economy as a whole."

NEWS FROM THE FONMON APIARY

Winter - time to kill off all the males!

WINTER is trying to make itself felt, and a variety of temperatures are on offer.

We have even had our first frosts and this has brought about a halt to bee activity.

As I expected, one of the colonies has died out, this does not surprise me. Earlier on this colony swarmed and the new Queen has failed to mate.

As a consequence, any eggs she has laid have produced males (drones) whose contribution to a colony's well being is nil. A colony with an unmated Queen is never going to be viable.

It is a common practice to unite colonies to improve their chances of getting through the winter. However, that was not an option here, as all I would be doing would be to introduce drones to another hive, and they would very soon be removed, as no drones are usually allowed to survive within a hive over winter.

Drones are only required for their ability to fertilise a Queen-bee. So they are all killed-off. It is the ladies (workers) who do this; they are the ones, who have worked tirelessly through the earlier part of the year, comb-building and collecting nectar, looking to the welfare of eggs and larvae in the hive, and, of course, their Queen.

With the reduction of daylight hours and the

lack of pollen and nectar bearing plants, the bees will become less active and settle down to see out the winter months in a torpid state.

Their food demands will be met from the stores put by for this annual and natural event.

This year has not been particularly kind to the bees or any pollinating insect at all. It has been the beekeeper's task to help the bees through a very wet and windy period.

Foraging has suffered greatly due to unfavourable weather; nectar shortage has had to be supported by way of feeding with liquid sugar, plus the ever-present varroa mite causes great concern. Other diseases are plaguing the bees also. In the 30 years that I have been a beekeeper, this will rank as one of the most trying.

So, what am I going to be doing until spring arrives? Well equipment has to be cleaned; hive sections must be repaired or replaced. New frames need to be assembled, fresh clean wax has to be on hand to suit the new frames, the smoker should not be neglected, and it will have a layer of carbon deposits on the interior, decreasing its efficiency so these deposits must be removed.

In short, try to be ready for the next year. Cleanliness, plus good hygiene must come to the fore these days, after all the bees practice it on a regular basis and so too should the beekeeper.

The internet is a wonderful source of beekeeping information, so established and new beekeepers should avail themselves of its bounty. All you need do is tap in the words beekeeping, whereupon a wealth of sites will be waiting to divulge their content.

For those who require pictorial information, the YouTube sites have an abundance on offer.

Harold Williams

Society to build on success

THE Glamorgan Ploughing and Hedging Society held its end of season meeting at the Six Bells Inn, Penmark last month.

The chairman, Mr Andrew Studley, welcomed the committee and reported that the ploughing match held in Marcross in September was a great success, and he felt that future years will grow on what has been a very popular event in the community.

Next year's ploughing match will be held on September 8, 2013 at Gileston Farm, by kind permission of Mr R M Thomas and Sons, Gileston, Barry.

In the 2013 match, it is planned to have the same number of classes in the competition, and it is hoped that the prize money will increase for those eager to show their ploughing skills.

The Ferguson Class will be upgraded to cater for those who have Ferguson T.20 tractors with their general purpose ploughs, and this will be sponsored by The Ferguson Club.

For further details, contact the chairman on 01446 781229 or 07980 921990, or the secretary on 029 20811202.

BG

News from Penarth Computer Club Things change

THERE is nothing so permanent as change - as an old saying goes; I've written several times about the way technology seems to be changing more and more quickly.

Even as we come to grips with the latest developments, the back-room boys are working on what comes next and next again.

The willingness of 'early adopters' to pay a high price to be first with the new stuff puts pressure on manufacturers to rush to market - sometimes too early for the best interest of the customer.

At first, the maker decides on the design and quality of his new product, but eventually the feed-back from the market (you, the customer) makes him improve the performance, the design, the reliability and the price.

The speed at which computers operate has gone up so much that it's taken for granted and not quoted in advertisements. The hard disk drive has similarly improved. Capacity has soared and the reliability is now assumed.

The life of a disk can be expected to be much longer than the usual life-span of the computer it is in.

The disk is expected, on average, to last over 400,000 hours (over 45 years), but for safety sake your back-up routine should assume it will fail very soon. (Sorry - I did say that I would stop going on about backing up data).

Early personal computers were almost universally beige boxes until Apple Macintosh started producing coloured cases. Then laptops were produced with a variety of 'clip-on' colours to satisfy demand for individuality.

Aficionados could get fancy cases and lights for their desktops, but

the general trend meant a switch from beige to matt black; rather reminiscent of military design. There is presently some complaint about the lack of options for other colours for desktops.

I can see some interesting discussions arising when a room needs redecorating and the bright shade of the computer doesn't quite fit in with the new colour scheme. Black will go with any colour, I'm told, but there is still a debate going on between those who prefer matt black to tacky, glossy black.

As computers get smaller, mobile phones have finished shrinking and are now getting larger as they morph from very small telephones into (larger) very small computers to accommodate a reasonable screen.

The screen eases the use of on-line dictionaries; causing the demise of at least one printed version.

The rise of social websites such as Twitter, Facebook and Flickr has forced people to think again about how much information they put on-line.

The ordinary person always finds it difficult to imagine what will be coming next. Reporting what happened in 2012 is a lot easier than speculating about the next five years, but there are plenty who will try. I wish them well.

The next meeting is on Tuesday, January 8 at All Saints Lesser Hall, Victoria Square, Penarth at 7.30pm. A brief AGM followed by a discussion on programmes and some Q & A, time permitting. See penarthcomputerclub.co.uk.

HOWARD DESMOND, Chairman

Youngsters add Inspiration



LITTLE Inspirations Day Nursery in Barry have had their garden developed - thanks to the Prince's Trust.

It had collaborated with the nursery previously and was keen to con-

tinue the relationship.

Over the space of three weeks, the team created an outdoor sand pit, digging area and decorated the wall, consulting with the children as to which characters they would like to be painted.

Out and About with The GEM

GEM/Ferris Entertainment screen acting scholarship for 2013 is up for grabs!

THE GEM/Ferris Entertainment Scholarship has become something of an institution in the Vale over the past five years – and in its sixth year, two GEM readers will get the chance of a free tuition in the skills of film acting.

One former scholarship winner from Barry, Verity Campbell, is to appear in a film to be shown in San Francisco in January.

Sixteen-year-old Verity won the GEM/Ferris Entertainment Scholarship after attending the free masterclass in Penarth two years ago.

Peter Ferris, who has taught screen acting for more than 25 years, and whose past pupils include Russell Brand, Martine McCutcheon and Louise Rednapp, told The GEM: "The masterclasses have starring credits on the International Movie Data Base (IMDB) and are held in Barry and Penarth on the third weekend of each month.

"At each masterclass the student actors shoot a 20-30 minute film that not only gets them screen acting credits on their CV but also gets them credits on IMDB.

GEM/Ferris Entertainment Voucher
valid for
FREE MASTERCLASS
Your chance to learn from world class tutors in screen acting
JANUARY 12th from 2pm - 5pm
at the Kymin, Penarth seafront, Beach Road, Penarth, CF64 1JX
Participants must be 12 years of age or over

the film industry's standard data base that includes every film produced."

If you click on www.imdb.com and type in 'Audition for a Vampire', 'Cold Blood' or 'Parallel Lives' you can see examples of credits for past Ferris Entertainment films shot in Cardiff and Belfast.

Ferris Entertainment is also leading the way in iPhone and Smartphone movie making.

Peter and his business partner Tony Myers have been invited to give a special showcase of mobile films at the 2013 Macworld-iWorld conference in San Francisco in January.

One of the films to be showcased in San Francisco is 'Mrs Thomas' protest' written by and starring Verity Campbell.

It was filmed at The Kymin in Penarth and the

log cabin in Porthkerry Park where Ferris Entertainment has previously shot four horror films during masterclasses over the past year.

Verity's introduction to her chance at 'stardom' and a career in the film and television industry came when she saw the article for The GEM/Ferris Entertainment free masterclass and scholarship in The GEM two years ago.

Peter explained: "The next annual free masterclass takes place from 2pm until 5pm on January 12 at the Kymin in Penarth.

"For a chance to win one of two GEM/Ferris Entertainment scholarships – one male, one female – which entitles you to attend three masterclasses in February, March and April and is worth £285 cut out the

attached coupon and come along.

"The winners will appear in three films made during those months.

"You don't have to have ever had any experience – the age range is from 12 to 112. Our current oldest student is 60 years old!"

"We look forward to meeting new students on January 12 when we have the introductory masterclass in screen act-

New year, new Momentum

IT'S now 2013, a new year and a great time to make positive changes in your life.

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without putting on weight, which is an important factor for many people.

Look out for my advert and editorial in next week's GEM, which will contain a special offer to all GEM readers.

Good luck for 2013 and a Happy New Year!
Kevin Arnold,
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CHOIR LOOKS BACK (AND FORWARD) TO VERY BUSY YEARS

COR Meibion De Cymru (the South Wales Male Choir) has had a very busy 2012 and look set for an interesting New Year.

A celebration concert, in aid of the Bryan Davies Memorial Fund, was held at the Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama, Cardiff, in September.

Proceeds from the concert were in aid of the fund and the choir was delighted to present a cheque for £1,500 to the college. Bryan Davies was well known in Wales, for his outstanding career and for accompanying so many of the world's leading international singers.

The Bryan Davies Memorial Fund supports young soloists and was awarded, this year, to Chinese pianist, Dongfang Song.

The choir has arranged several concerts in 2013, including those at Oxford Town Hall, Norwich Cathedral and St David's Cathedral. In August,

Côr Meibion De Cymru will represent Wales at the InterCeltic Festival in L'Orient, Brittany.

This will be a very prestigious trip for the concert, as the festival attracts over 700,000 visitors from around the world.

There will be numerous services and commemorations in 2014, to mark the centenary of the outbreak of WW1. Côr Meibion De Cymru has been invited to sing at Faubourg d'Amiens British Cemetery, Arras and at the Menin Gate in Ypres.

The choir has visited the War World One battlefields on many occasions and will be honoured to attend in 2014.

The choir offers a warm welcome to new members, at five weekly music learning groups, spread across Wales and Wantage, Oxfordshire. Anyone interested in joining the choir should contact the secretary on 01446 746387.

Roger Hopkin



ABOVE:
Barry's Verity Campbell stars in a film being shown in San Francisco later this month.

ing and will show examples of our past films.

"We will also choose our two new scholarship winners!"

... And I can shop anywhere!
Helen

NEW GROUPS
MONDAY
Cwm Talwg Pub
7.30pm
Severn Avenue
Wigby - 07515 824988
(First group Wednesday
2nd Jan reverting to
Mon 7th Jan)

TUESDAY
Llantwit Major
9.30am
Catholic Church,
Ham Lane East
Helen - 01446 750738
(First group Thurs 3rd
reverting to Tues 8th Jan)

MONDAY
Barry
4.30 & 6.30pm
The Tadross Hotel,
Holton Road
(next to Bassett Park)
Lorraine - 01446 407002

Rhoose
5.30pm & 7.30pm
Celtic Way Community
Centre, Celtic Way
Helen - 01446 750738

Penarth
5.30pm & 7.30pm
Elfed Avenue United
Church, Elfed Avenue
Nia - 07793 885581

TUESDAY
Barry - 5.30pm
Holy Trinity
Presbyterian Church,
Trinity Street
Joanne - 01446 404897

Llantwit Major
5.30pm & 7.30pm
Our Lady & St Illtyd
Church (Catholic)
Ham Lane East
Helen - 01446 750738

Sully - 6.30pm
The Old School
South Road
Niki - 01446 740394

WEDNESDAY
Barry
4.45 & 6.45pm
St. Francis Millennium
Centre, Park Road,
Porth-y-Castell
Annmarie - 01446
736534

Barry - 6.00pm
Cadoxton
Methodist Church
Church Road
Joanne - 01446 404897

Penarth
9.30am & 11.45am
All Saints Church Hall
Victoria Square
Tracy - 07894 275853

Penarth
5.30pm & 7.30pm
All Saints Church Hall
Victoria Square
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THURSDAY
Barry - 5.30pm
Highlight Park
Community Centre, Barry
Annmarie -
01446 736534

Cowbridge - 9.30am
Cowbridge
Rugby Club
Rob - 07708 941279

Dinas Powys
5.30pm & 7.30pm
The Cabin by swimming
pool, Hebron Hall
Sarah - 07525852288

Barry - 10.15am
St Helen's Church Hall
Wynham Street
Niki - 01446 740394

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The New Year Cardiff Toy and Train sale

THE New Year opens with a bang for toy and train collectors when the big Cardiff show takes place on Saturday, January 5 at Penarth Leisure Centre in Cogan, between 10.30am and 3pm.

The venue will be packed with 100 tables trading a huge range of

goods, old and new. Value for money is the keynote!

Organiser Chris Dyer said this week: "This is the start of our third year at Penarth Leisure Centre, running four shows each year, and it has been a major success story following the demise of the previous Cardiff show which was held elsewhere and was operated by another organiser."

The venue benefits from great facilities

including level access, excellent lighting, good catering and plenty of free car parking.

However, one of the biggest plus points is the very close proximity of Cogan Railway Station (ATW) and it is located just across the road from the leisure centre. Regular bus services also serve the area well.

Traders from all over the UK will be operating at the Cardiff Show and some great bargains are promised. In addition, the stall holders are keen to buy and to exchange and will be happy to give free 'without obligation' valuations.

The best advice for the public is to raid your lofts and attics and bring along your unwanted items.

For more information, call 01643 702757 or 07966 694579; website www.chrisdyerfairs.co.uk.

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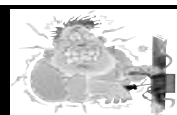
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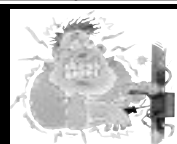
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Family Notices

INGLE

Joan

Peacefully, in the Princess of Wales Hospital, Bridgend, on 19th December, 2012, aged 78 years. Loving wife to Pat (Richard). Mother of Susan and Stephen, also grandmother and great grandmother. Will be greatly missed by all who knew her.

Resting at A G Adams and Son Funeral Home, Gladstone Road, Barry until the service in the chapel on Monday, 7th January 2013 at 1.15 pm followed by interment at St Athan Cemetery.

Family flowers only. Donations may be sent to Marie Curie Cancer Care, Marie Curie Hospice, Cardiff and the Vale, Bridgeman Road, Penarth, CF64 3YR.

Nansi GEORGE

Nansi George of Cowbridge, passed away peacefully at home on December 14, 2012. Dearly beloved mother of Eyllt, sister of Blodwen, a well-loved lady in the local community. Nansi will be laid to rest in her home village of Llanmanan on the Denbigh Moors. Donations/cheques please made out to 'Crossroads Care In The Vale', care of E George, 22 Mafeking Road, Pen-Y-Lan, Cardiff CF23 5DQ.

HALLIWELL (Nee Shore)

The funeral of Marilyn Elaine will take place on Tuesday 8th January at 2.15pm at Barry Crematorium. Mr Ralph Halliwell & family would like to thank all relatives, friends & neighbours for their kind expressions of sympathy, cards & floral tributes received on the very sad loss of Marilyn. If desired, flowers may be sent to Hickman Rd Funeral Home, Penarth.

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Public Notices

GOODS VEHICLE OPERATOR'S LICENCE

IAN ANTHONY
MATTHEWS

Trading as

Ian Matthews Haulage
of
Park Farm, Sigingstone,
Cowbridge, Glamorgan
CF71 7LP

is applying to change an
existing licence as follows:
To add an operating centre
to keep 4 goods vehicles
and 4 trailers at
Cenin Ltd.,
The Research Centre,
Parc Stormy,
Stormy Down,
Bridgend CF33 4RS

Owners or occupiers of land,
(including buildings) near the
operating centre(s) who
believe that their use or
enjoyment of that land would
be affected, should make
written representations to the
Traffic Commissioner at
Hillcrest House, 386 Harehill
Lane, Leeds, LS9 6NF stating
their reasons, within 21 days of
this notice. Representors must
at the same time send a copy of
their representations to the
applicant at the address given
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A guide to making representations
is available from the
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From school shows to tree planting – a busy month at Vale Welsh medium school



ABOVE: All dressed up in wellies for the tree planting day.

**Recollections
of the
school show**
OVER the last few
months, pupils and
staff at Ysgol
Gyfun Bro
Morgannwg have
been very busy
working on a
school show.

The school musical
was an excellent
opportunity for every-
one to get involved.

It was an original
show, written and com-
posed by the music and
drama teachers, and
was first performed at
the National Eisteddfod in the sum-
mer!

A lot of hard work
was put into the per-
formance and I'm sure
I can speak for every-
one when I say that a
lot of fun was had by
all.

We will all have
very fond memories
from this excellent
show.

by Gwydion Evans,
year-9.

**Gardening
project**
YEAR-10 pupils
studying the Welsh
Bacc, worked with
the reception class
at Ysgol Nant
Talwg to plant
trees.

The pupils have
been learning about
types of trees, how to
write risk assessments
and how to plant young
saplings successfully.

The project was a
good opportunity to
develop the pupil's
community work and
to build on the rela-
tionship between Ysgol
Gyfun Bro Morgannwg
and Ysgol Gymraeg
Nant Talwg.

MP's visit

IT was a pleasure
to welcome Alun
Cairns MP, to a
Welsh Bacc lesson
in December.

This is the third time
we have welcomed the
Member of Parliament
to join us, and every
time it is nice to listen



ABOVE: The school show had previously been performed at the National Eisteddfod in Llandow.



ABOVE:
Vale MP Alun
Cairns visited to
talk about his par-
liamentary life
with Welsh Bacc

to him speaking about
his experiences in
Parliament, and before
that as a member in the
Assembly.

MFL

transition

IN December, 120
very enthusiastic
pupils from the pri-
mary school came
together for a Bro
Morgannwg MFL
transition day.

The pupils enjoyed a
variety of linguistic
experiences – in
French, Spanish and
German as well as the
opportunity to create a
multi-language
Christmas card in the
art department.

The day ended with
a European quiz led by
members of the sixth
form.

A big thank you to
year 6 and we look for-
ward to seeing you
again in September.



RIGHT:
Year-10
pupils
worked with
children
from Ysgol
Nant Talwg
on a tree-
planting
day.

VALE RAMBLERS TAKE THE TREVETHICK TRAIL

The Vale Ramblers at Quakers yard Railway Station



2012 was been a busy year for the Vale of Glamorgan Ramblers, including Sunday walks, mid week walks, Wednesday evening walks during the summer, and two weekends away.

The spring weekend was taken at the Isle of Wight, and the autumn walk was in the East Sussex area.

Ramblers were very involved with the National Eisteddfod, offering walks through the week, and also

sharing a stand with Ramblers Cymru.

We were also at the Vale of Glamorgan Show, promoting walking, and the work of the Ramblers.

Our last walk of 2012 started from the railway station at Quakers Yard, or Mynwent y Crynwyr in Welsh, literally meaning the graveyard of the Quakers. Walking along a very muddy path, we joined up with Trevethick Trail, which is a nine-mile cycling track between Abercynon and Merthyr Tydfil. A

long the way, there are some remains of a viaduct which

must have spanned the river, and in times gone by played an important part in the industrialisation of this area.

Leaving this path, which followed the River Taff, we made our way up towards Merthyr Vale, and climbed the Cefn Merthyr still using a cycling track.

Over coffee, we enjoyed views across the valley towards Aberfan, and the busy A470. How many times have we all travelled along that busy road, and not realising that across the valley this path is there?

Making our way, we doubled back and walked along an old

drovers' track, which eventually bought the group down into the village of Trelewis, a former mining village in the Taff Bargoed Valley where there is now a country park in place of the mines.

Following the river once again, we followed the path through Treharris, before emerging once again into the village of Quakers Yard. Our thanks to Ian Fraser for leading this walk.

Further information is available on our website valeofglamorganramblers.co.uk or follow us on Facebook.

Gwenda Fitzpatrick

WELSH SOCIETY'S £2,200 BOOST FOR TY HAPUS CHARITY



TY HAPUS in Barry founded by Justine Pickering to help younger people with dementia receive care and therapies and to spend time with others in similar

condition, was Cymdeithas Gymraeg Dinas Powys Welsh Society's chosen charity for 2012.

After a very successful fundraising evening in the company of Côr

Bechgyn Bro Taf and following their Christmas service at St Peter's Church, the society presented Justine and David Pickering and their daughter Coco with a cheque for £2,200.

Young Stefanie's winning design



STEFANIE MAURER of Ysgol Gymraeg Sant Baruc in Barry has seen her Nativity design chosen for the Christmas card produced by Alun Cairns MP for the Vale of Glamorgan.

He called in at the school and interrupted lessons for year-1 to present Stefanie with a bundle of her own edition of the winning cards for her to use and send out to her family and friends, and a gift bag of art goodies.

NEWS IN BRIEF
Art society
ON Thursday, January 10, Cowbridge Art Society welcomes Clare Smith (Curator at the National Museum of Wales) who will give an illustrated presentation on The Art of Murder: Walter Sickert and Jack the Ripper. The society meets on Thursday evenings at the Old Hall, Cowbridge from 7pm - 9 pm.

Visitors welcome. For full programme, see www.cowbridgeartsociety.com.

Sarn surgery
OGMORE MP Huw Irranca-Davies will be holding a surgery tomorrow, January 4, between 3pm - 4pm at Sarn Community Centre.

'Sony still a key employer' says regional AM



ABOVE: The AM (left) pictured at Sony.

ON a visit to Sony plant, Pencoeed, the South Wales Central AM, Andrew RT Davies, said: "Sadly, Sony no longer has quite the footprint that it once had in south Wales. However, it remains a key employer in the region with many Vale residents also amongst its 380 or so staff.

"It was fascinating to see how the plant has evolved and to witness the production process in full, including high end camera technology used by broadcasters the world over.

"It was also heartening to discover that the technological expertise possessed by the staff has enabled the Pencoeed plant to compete successfully for new contracts and the hope is that in the long run we may start to see a return to the capacity once

enjoyed in the area."

Among the products produced by Sony workers for other companies was the Raspberry Pi - a low cost computer aimed at encouraging schoolchildren to develop an interest in programming skills.

The units, which were originally produced in China, are now made exclusively by the Pencoeed factory and Mr Davies said that it was extremely positive that Welsh workers were able to compete effectively with rivals in countries with low wage costs.

"Not only was it great to see projects such as this one to develop computer programming skills in children, the plant had also been successful in securing contracts to manufacture environmentally friendly LED street lighting," the AM observed.

THE VALE OF GLAMORGAN COUNCIL CYNGOR BRO MORGANNWG Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act, 1990 Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (Wales) Order 2012

Listed Building Consent / Caniatâd Adeilad Rhestredig

Application No:/ Rhif y cais: 2012/01308/LBC
Proposal/Cynnig: Enlarge the existing 1970's extension towards the rear of the house, to accommodate a large living room to connect with the existing kitchen and dining area; open up the kitchen and dining rooms, and create a larger opening between the house and extension. Also part of the works in this new area will be a wine cellar and w.c. The alterations will include new windows, and large glazed bi-folding doors to the rear 22, Victoria Road, Penarth

Location:/Lleoliad: 22, Victoria Road, Penarth
Listed Building:/ Adeilad Rhestredig Grade II

Affecting setting of a Listed Building/ Cais (au) sy'n effeithio ar leoliad Adeilad Rhestredig

Application No:/ Rhif y cais: 2012/01309/FUL
Proposal/Cynnig: Enlarge the existing 1970's extension towards the rear of the house, to accommodate a large living room to connect with the existing kitchen and dining area; open up the kitchen and dining rooms, and create a larger opening between the house and extension. Also part of the works in this new area will be a wine cellar and W.C. The alterations will include new windows, and large glazed bi-folding doors to the rear 22, Victoria Road, Penarth

Location:/Lleoliad: Affecting 22 Victoria Road, Penarth, Grade II
Listed Building:/ Adeilad Rhestredig

Application(s) with REVISED Environmental Statement Cais (au) gyda Datganiad Amgylcheddol DIWYGIEDIG

NOTICE UNDER ARTICLE 8

Proposed development at Land to the north of the railway line off Pentir Y De, Rhooose.

I give notice that Bellway Homes Limited and Persimmon Homes Limited is applying to The Vale of Glamorgan Council for Planning Permission to Outline planning for the construction of up to 350 dwellings; the laying out of formal and informal open space, and changing rooms; new means of vehicular access onto Pentir Y De and associated infrastructure.

The proposal has been submitted with a REVISED environmental statement which can be inspected at the address given below. Members of the public may obtain copies of the environmental statement at a charge of £50.00 (CD £5.00) from Boyer Planning Limited, 1B, Oak Tree Court, Mulberry Drive, Cardiff Gate Business Park, Cardiff. CF23 8RS so long as stocks last.

Members of the public may inspect copies of:

- The application.
- The plans.
- The environmental statement.
- Other documents submitted with the application.

at the address given below during all reasonable hours until 24 January, 2013.

Anyone who wishes to make representations about this application should write to the Operational Manager Development & Building Control at the address given below by 24 January 2013 quoting reference 2010/00686/EAO.

HYSBYSIAD O DAN ERTHYGL 8

Datblygiad arfaethedig yn Land to the north of the railway line off Pentir Y De, Rhooose

Hysbysir trwy hyn Bellway Homes Limited and Persimmon Homes Limited n gwneud cais i Gyngor Bro Morgannwg am Ganiatâd Cynllunio ar gyfe Outline planning for the construction of up to 350 dwellings; the laying out of formal and informal open space, and changing rooms; new means of vehicular access onto Pentir Y De and associated infrastructure

Cafodd y cynnig ei gyflwyno gyda datganiad amgylcheddol DIWYGIEDIG sydd ar gael i'w ddarllen yn y cyfeiriad isod. Caiff aelodau o'r cyhoedd brynu copïau o'r datganiad am £50.00 (CD £5.00) oddi wrth/o Boyer Planning Limited, 1B, Oak Tree Court, Mulberry Drive, Cardiff Gate Business Park, Cardiff. CF23 8RS tra bydd y stoc ar gael.

Caiff aelodau o'r cyhoedd hefyd ddarllen copïau o'r:

- cais;
- cynlluniau;
- datganiad amgylcheddol;
- dogfennau eraill a gyflwynwyd gyda'r cais,

yn y cyfeiriad isod yn ystod oriau rhesymau tan 24 January, 2013.

Dylai unrhyw un sydd am gwneud sylwadau ar y cais ysgrifennu at Rheolwr Gweithredol Datblygiad a Rheidoli Adeiladu erbyn 24 January 2013 a ddylfynnu'r cyfeiriad 2010/00686/EAO.

Details may be inspected for 21 days at the address given below, or via <http://vonline.planning-register.co.uk/>

Gall manylion eu harchwilio am 21 diwrnod yn y cyfeiriad a roddir isod, neu drwy <http://vonline.planning-register.co.uk/>

Dated / Dyddiedig: 3rd January, 2013

M. Goldsworthy, Operational Manager Development & Building Control, Vale of Glamorgan Council, Dock Office, Barry. CF63 4RT

School pupils show Christmas spirit with gifts for the elderly



THE best way to cheer yourself up is to cheer someone else up – that was the message from students at Cowbridge Comprehensive School as they prepared to cheer up some of the senior citizens in the local community.

Students from across all year groups within the school demonstrated their kindness and generosity when they thoughtfully assembled 58 hampers for the elderly and for less privileged families.

The hampers were suitably trimmed and filled with fantastic festive items with a Christmas card and photo from the students.

Twenty-five senior citizens from Age Concern Rural Communities attended a tea party at the school where a number of the school's talent-

ed students performed a range of musical items, followed by the presentation of the hampers.

In addition, a number of hampers were delivered to the homes of those who were unable to attend.

Prior to being given to the citizens, students at the school had collated the hampers as part of a whole school competition.

The hampers were judged by members of support staff who chose a year group winner, a novelty winner and overall school winner based upon the hamper content and the creative flair demonstrated.

A selection of the overall winning hampers were raffled in the Christmas concert, which raised almost £2,000 for the school, and a number of hampers were donated to the local FoodBank.



Library staff open a new chapter – on the panto stage!



LIBRARIANS from Bridgend County Borough Council's library and information service recently trod the boards for the first time – in the service's first-ever pantomime.

The would-be actors kept the audience 'hooked' with their interpretation of *Peter Pan*, which they performed outside Bridgend Library on Wyndham Street.

Around 200 people gathered to watch the show, which the librarians had also written and produced with help from local children's

writer and entertainer Mike Church, who took the part of Hook.

Peter, Wendy, Hook and Smee were accompanied by some unexpected friends from the world of panto, as the Queen of Hearts, Prince Charming and an ugly step-sister also took to the stage.

Father Christmas brought the event to a special finale, as he joined the characters on stage to hand out sweets to all the children in the audience – before inviting them to the stage to join in dancing to Gangnam Style!



LLANDOUGH YOUNG PUT THEIR VIEWS ON FILM

BUDDING film makers in Llandough have held a public screening of their film, *The Voice of Young People*, made as part of the Llandough Out Loud (LOL) project.

The LOL project, led by the Vale Council's youth street team, gives young people a voice in their community.

They wrote the script, as well as shooting and editing the film, under the guidance of the youth street team.

The presentation evening, held on the V-Pod bus was attended by local councillors, parents and staff from youth services.

In January, there will be another opportunity for Llandough residents to see the film and to discuss possible steps for community development.

Lauren, Adam and Allan, three of the young people who worked on the project, said: "A couple of weeks ago, the V-Pod and Pulse came to Llandough because there is nothing here to entertain us. We told the staff about how we could improve Llandough."

"We have made a film expressing our needs towards our future in Llandough. During our time on the V-Pod, we have put together suggestions of what we could do to make Llandough a better place. The V-Pod has been arriving here every Thursday night at 6.30pm until 9pm."

Did you know you can read your GEM online?

cowbridge-today.co.uk
or bridgend-today.co.uk

SIAB Schools' Indoor Combined Events International, Glasgow - December 1, 2012

All three Vale pupils, who competed at the recent SIAB Schools' Indoor Combined Events International in Glasgow, came home with a medal.

The trio - Matthew Collins (Barry Comprehensive, under-18), and the Cowbridge duo of Annabel Curle (under-18) and Tom Trotman (under-16) - were members of a nineteen strong Welsh Schools' party - sixteen athletes, team managers Dai Gatehouse and Joan Goldsmith, and team coach Mike Guest - who made the long journey by road back to Wales in buoyant mood after a long hard day of competition.

The event was held at the new Emirates Arena - one of a number of new facilities opened ahead of the Commonwealth Games in the city in 2014. It is sited just across the road from Parkhead, the home of Celtic, in the east side of the city, and adjacent to the Sir Chris Hoy velodrome. This SIAB fixture was the first track & field international to be held at the venue.

For year 12 Matthew, the excitement of competing at this international for the third time and wearing a Welsh Schools vest for the seventh time was tinged with a little sadness because this was his last year - but he knows that he went out at the top.

His previous best for the five events in the indoor pentathlon was set last year at the old venue - the Kelvin Hall. He broke 3000 points on that occasion - a personal best of 3082 - but, because of the quality of the competition, he found himself ranked only twelfth of the sixteen under 18 boys.

This time, all the hard work in training paid off with improved performances in the first four events. Opening with a 60 metres hurdles time of 8.61 seconds (834), he was already up by over

100 points on his 9.07 clocking in 2011. A modest 21 centimetre improvement with the 5 kg shot - 10.66 metres (525) - kept him on track but his two event score of 1359 only ranked him tenth.

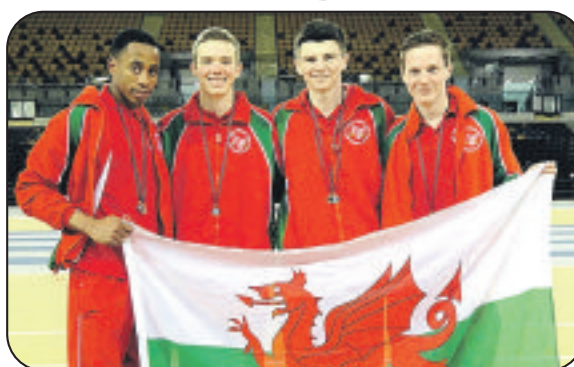
Since he first started competing in the sport in 2010, Matthew's sprinting speed has improved, but he has slowed over 800 metres. In this competition, he zipped around an empty Emirates stadium in 23.04 seconds, the second quickest in the under-18 boys behind team-mate Aled Price (Maes yr Yrfa). The 782 points gained pushed his score up to 2141 points for a sixth place ranking.

With his excellent basic speed, Matthew has the essential ingredient to produce good quality long jumps, and he should feel pleased with his best effort of 6.12 metres, an improvement of 35 centimetres, but it dropped him down the positions, slipping to eighth overall on 2755.

Surprisingly, the last event - the 800 metres - was a really high quality affair at the quick end. One of the Scots made the most of home soil to run the four laps in 2 minutes 01.67 seconds, and there were four more sub 2 minutes 11 seconds performances. Matthew was just over four seconds slower than last year, clocking 2 minutes 18.74 seconds. That placed him tenth in that event, but the 469 points earned pushed him to a new personal best of 3223 points for a final position of seventh.

The icing on the cake was that Matthew combined with team-mates David Omoregie (Bishop of Llandaff, 1st, 3690) and Aled Price (2nd, 3569) to record a new Welsh Schools record score of 10,482 points - good enough to claim the team gold medals ahead of English Schools.

That team result means that Matthew goes out on a high having won under 16 team gold in February 2011 and under 18 silver last year; well done!



The under-18 boys who claimed team gold ahead of England - David Omoregie (Bishop of Llandaff), Matthew Collins (Barry Comprehensive), Aled Price (Maes yr Yrfa) and Luke Ward (Hawarden). PICTURES BY MIKE GUEST.

Year 10 Tom Trotman was making his second appearance in the under 16 competition. Last year, in a competition in which only the top three of the sixteen boys bettered 3000 points, he was disappointed to finish twelfth with a for him lowly 2479 points.

Although his under-16 squad, which included school-mate George Griffiths, claimed third team place, Tom's points total did not make him a scoring member.

This year, he opened far more brightly, recording 9.20 seconds over the 60 metres hurdles to rank twelfth on 702 points. Although there were two jumpers over 6 metres, the overall long jump standard was down, with Tom ranked third thanks to his 5.92 metres best (569), with his two event total of 1271 pushing him up to tenth. He can also feel happy about his 200 metres performance. A 24.09 seconds time placed him fifth in the age group (685) and his total of 1956 boosted him to seventh. Another encouraging performance in the shot (4k, 11.53m, 578), gained another top five event ranking and overall sixth place on 2534 points.

The one essential element missing from Tom's competition profile is endurance and, on a day when twelve of the sixteen boys ran under 2 minutes 20 seconds, that

proved costly.

Tom completed the four laps of the 800 metres in 2 minutes 30.75 seconds for 313 points and a five event total of 2847, over 120 points better than in his November outing at the National Indoor Athletics Centre in Cardiff but that 800 metres run dropped him down the order to finish twelfth again - but in a much higher quality competition in which the top seven scored more than 3000 points.

That twelfth place made Tom the third Welsh Schools scorer as they gained third place in the team contest.

For Annabel, this was her debut in this international, though she did compete for the Welsh Schools team in her specialist event, the high jump, at the SIAB Schools' under-17 international at Ashford in July.

All four members of the squad were coming off a 'high' having set new personal best totals at the November Welsh Schools' Invitation Indoor combined events championships at NIAC. On that occasion, Annabel's score was 3057 points.

There was a major reality check in the first event - the shot (4 kg). Annabel's best put of 6.63 metres (311) ranked her sixteenth. Event two - the 60 metres hurdles - was a little better with a 9.78 seconds timing gaining 754 points and a climb up to fourteenth place (1065). At NIAC, the long jump was encouraging with a best of 5.05 metres but here the progress in the hurdles was undone as a best jump of 4.64 metres (464) again dropped Annabel to overall sixteenth (1529).

The Cowbridge year 11 pupil has really improved her high jump over the last two summers and, although not on top form after contesting three events, Annabel produced a 1.54 metres clearance - as did her three team-mates. That performance earned 666 points for a four event total of 2195 points and fifteenth place.

The overall standard

in the final event, the 800 metres, was not as high as in the two boys' sections. Only two girls dipped under 2 minutes 30 seconds, with another eight sub 2 minutes 40. Annabel ran 2 minutes 44.09 seconds (527) which ranked her eleventh in the event.

Her final points' score of 2722 placed her thirteenth and helped the Welsh Schools team finish third ahead of Ireland. Annabel will be disappointed with that five event total, but knows that she has another year in the age group, and can go over 3000 points next time.

Congratulations to all three Vale pupils.

The date for next summer's Joint Welsh outdoor Combined Events championships has been set as Saturday, June 15, 2013, with the Welsh Schools Invitation Indoor under-16 & under-18 championships pencilled in for Sunday, November 3 - and the SIAB Schools' Indoor Combined Events International pencilled in for the Emirates Arena in early December.

PETER MORRIS

Poor fishing for anglers

RECENTLY, a dozen anglers from Seaview Lads competed with high hopes of whiting and perhaps even a codling or two but hopes were dashed on what ended up as a disappointing day.

Weights were low and only three anglers caught fish. Ada Harris included a nice whiting of 1lb 14oz in his winning weight while Steve Doble was not remotely close with a two fish haul for 1lb 10z.

Thomas Williams landed a fine pointing of 1lb for 3rd place; fishing can only get better. JC



The under-16 boys' team, which finished in third place - Tom Trotman (Cowbridge), Ryan James (Radyr), Nikita Neary (Dyffryn Taf) and Harry Hillman (St Teilo's).



Bronze team medals for the under-18 girls - Claire Taylor (Radyr), Annabel Curle (Cowbridge), Georgia Bates (Prestatyn) and Katherine Morris (Bishop Vaughan). Katherine also took individual bronze.

Getting in the right Order

'ALPHABETICAL ORDER', returning to the racetrack for the first time in 415 days, landed the Lingfield Marriott Hotel & Country Club Maiden Open National Hunt Flat Race on Lingfield's all weather track last Saturday for Aberthyn trainer Tim Vaughan.

Ridden by Michael Byrne, *Alphabetical Order* was a 13-2 chance.

Tim's horses were in good form at Ffos Las on Monday where he saddled two winners and almost made it a treble when his *Ski Sunday* just failed to beat the Rebecca Curtis trained *Stow*

by the minimum official distance - a nose.

In the opener, Tim's *Alboraz* finished three and a half lengths ahead of the Evan Williams trained *King Of Wing* and later in the day his nine-year-old *Scorched Son*, carrying a hefty 11st. 12lbs. in very heavy conditions, romped home a long way clear of *Street Dance*.

All three horses were ridden by Richard Johnson. Debbie Hamer, who hails from the Bridgend area but who now trains in west Wales, won the Beginners Chase with her seven-year-old *Benanti* who was ridden by Paddy Brennan.

BRIAN LEE

Castle beat champions!

AFTER the Colcot beat Castle FC 4-1 in the last meeting between the teams, there was a lot of tension in the changing rooms of the Castle.

The return game kicked off and started in very sloppy fashion by both sides as the conditions were soggy.

Castle FC broke the deadlock first with Kyle Caton scoring with his head from a corner taken by Casey Thompson. Colcot then brought the score line back to 1-1.

Rhys then put the Castle back into the lead from a cross from Casey Thompson yet again, which was then followed by another two goals by Kyle

to make it 4-1. Colcot responded with the utmost urgency to score two quick goals and it looked like they could easily snatch the game and swing things around.

Kyle Caton then snatched his fourth of the game to bring the game to a close at 5-3.

Casey Thompson managed to assist in every goal and won man of the match.

It was a very hard fought game by both teams. The Castle FC would like to thank the Castle Hotel for their hospitality after every game and also a big thank you to Jason Parsons for his sponsorship. SO

DRAGON SPORTS GET NETBALLERS FIRED UP!

BOYS and girls from eight primary schools in Penarth have enjoyed a fun introduction to netball this term thanks to the Dragon Sport scheme.

Overseen by Sport Wales, and run locally by the Vale Council's Active Young People team, the Dragon Sport scheme encourages extra-curricular sporting activities for children aged seven to 11.

The Penarth netball league was one of several fun competitions that have been held during the last 12 months to help inspire local youngsters to play sport on a regular basis.

Ysgol Pen-y-Garth hosted the matches in their sports hall, with the other schools taking part being Evenlode, Fairfield, Sully, Cogan, St Andrew's Major, Llandough and

Victoria.

Explaining the format, the Vale Council's Dragon Sport Assistant Pete Hardwick said: "The league ran during the autumn term and was played completely for fun, with none of the scores recorded. At this age, it is important for the children to enjoy playing and having fun rather than worrying about winning and losing. The teams were mixed, with a maximum of two boys on court at any one time, giving everyone a broader experience of sport. Thanks to the schools who took part and to Ysgol Pen Y Garth for hosting the games."

Netball is one of eight key sports that the scheme promotes along with football, rugby, athletics, hockey, golf, cricket and tennis. To find out more please go online at www.valeofglamorgan.gov.uk/sportsandplay.

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Met blue, white leather, 39,000 miles, £7,500 of extras when new
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Met silver with beige leather trim, 73,000 miles with sat nav
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In white with tan leather, 40,000 miles, 1 owner, huge specification
£29,995



07 HYUNDAI Coupe 1.6 III
In electric blue, 48,000 miles, 1 owner, sports coupe
£4,995



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In silver, 86,121 miles, air con, alloys, etc.
£6,995



04 SMART City Pulse Automatic
Red/black two tone, £30 road tax
£2,795



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MOTORING AROUND with TIM SAUNDERS

Seat Mii conjures up video game memories

AREN'T computer games a great escape from reality? Up to the age of 16, I used to enjoy playing them, but thankfully, there's no time for that anymore with my demanding wife and daughter!

As I sit inside the Seat Mii, I find my mind wandering back to that distant past where I was the unbeatable Formula One champion of the world, and I don't mind admitting it, a dab hand at any rally circuit, too. For the Mii name reminds me of the Nintendo Wii video game console.

Perhaps the Seat marketing team felt that Wii gamers consist of the cool and hip 18 to 35 category that they want to appeal to.

The sort of guys and gals who like to drive a bright red little city car and thereby stand out from the bland and characterless crowd.

The type of people who consider the Mii to be a reflection of their gregarious selves.

Ironically, I have just driven the highly econom-

ical Skoda Citigo, which looks pretty much identical and scores highly with me.

Aren't they the same car? Isn't history going to repeat itself? Will I not simply find myself re-writing the same article?

The diminutive Seat might share the same wheelbase as the Skoda Citigo and VW up! but there is more to it than just being a rebranded VW.

Firstly, it incorporates Spanish flair and styling with German engineering, as the press office is keen to point out.

But where Skoda and VW target a more middle aged motorist, the Seat is the young person's choice. The five-door model tested has a much smoother and decisive five-speed manual gearbox and there's a sizeable electric sliding glass sunroof, which was missing in the Skoda.

Its two-tone grey and black interior is far more appealing than the black in the Skoda, but it lacks the heated front seats. The two share the same Navigon touch screen that is not only a sat nav but a useful trip computer that provides an up-to-date mpg and distance to refill reading.



The Seat Mii is looking to put the manufacturer back on the competitive city car map.

The Mii also has cruise control as you can see in the video at testdrives.biz.

A criticism, though, is that when the temperature plummeted to 1.5 Celsius during the test, the side windows mist up – despite the blowers being on

full and pumping out warm air.

Parkers, the car experts, say: "Not since the days of the Arosa has Seat been involved in the competitive city car market, but it should be a big name again in the sector with the Mii. It offers good levels of refinement, is perfect for driving in tight town situations and has a high quality interior."

In the same way that the Skoda Citigo makes a good long-distance companion, so too does the one-litre Seat Mii. These really are versatile little numbers and excellent small cars.

The Seat Mii is the funkier version and should appeal to a younger market. The five-door model is best for practicality.

New price range: £7,925-£10,890.

Used price range: £6,393-£8,232 – 2012 onwards.

Economy: up to 80mpg.

0-60mph: 13.9secs.

Top speed: 99mph.

Power: 59bhp.

Watch the video at www.testdrives.biz.

Police ladies futsal team make an arresting sight!

A team of female police officers from South Wales Police once again represented the force at the World Police Futsal Games in Amsterdam recently.

They joined 37 teams from police forces from across the globe in the annual competition.

Countries including Australia, New Zealand, Paraguay, Brazil and from the Caribbean took part in the tournament.

A squad of nine players, mainly from Central BCU, competed well in a number of close matches and eventually came out in ninth position out of a total entry of 37 teams in their category.

Barry-based DC Judith Nunn, who captained the team, said: "This is the biggest competition of its kind. Almost 3,000 colleagues from all over the world took part in the 30th World Police Indoor Soccer Tournament.

"As well as competing against some individual

force teams, we came up against a number of national police squads, including both finalists Spain and France, and acquitted ourselves well in all our matches.

"We had to raise the funds to attend the competition ourselves and we are very grateful to our team sponsor, Dunraven Windows from Pyle, who were extremely generous in their support.

The team consisted of: DC 4649 Judith Nunn (captain), DC Miriam Purple, PC Liz Window, PC Louise England, PC Nicola Grey, PC Debbie Robbins, PCSO Nerys Lloyd, PS Nia Hughes and PS Elen Reeves.

RK

Local optician sponsors national side

SPECSAVERS in Maesteg has signed a three-year sponsorship agreement with the Wales Deaf Rugby Union.

The £10,000 deal will see Specsavers become an official provider of audiology testing to the WDRU, as well as its kit sponsor, while it will also support its players with the provision of new state-of-the-art Bluetooth hearing aids for its players.

Specsavers will also support the WDRU's

community strategy programme, which offers children from schools and deaf units across the country the opportunity to take part in rugby skills sessions organised by WRU regional coaches and WDRU volunteers.

Wales Deaf Rugby was formed in 1998, and the team won the inaugural and only World Deaf Rugby Championship held to date, in 2002, by defeating hosts New Zealand 28-14 in the final.

Girls get their football kicks

GIRLS in the Vale are getting an extra chance to get their football kicks – thanks to a new primary schools league.

The Vale Council's Active Young People team has joined forces with the Vale Ladies & Girls FC to set up the new initiative which involves local schools getting together to play matches once a month.

Eleven Vale primary schools have signed up so far – Murch Juniors, Albert, Llancarfan, Pendoylan, Romilly, Cadoxton, Sully, Rhws, All Saints, Palmerston and St Helen's – and they are also being joined by pupils from St Fagan's Primary School. The latest round of fixtures was held at the Cadoxton Sports Hall, while matches are also played at Romilly Primary School in Barry.

Explaining the league

further, the Vale Council's Active Young People co-ordinator, Ben Williams, said: "The league involves girls from year-3 up to year-6. It's giving them another chance to play regular football and also lets them know about the local community clubs that they can join.

"We held a football festival for girls back in the summer which proved to be really successful, while the women's Olympic football being held in Cardiff was also great for raising the profile of the game locally."

For information about local sporting opportunities for all ages, please go online at www.valeofglamorgan.gov.uk/sportsandplay, while you can keep up-to-date with community sports and play news from the Vale of Glamorgan by following @valesportsnews on Twitter.

Barry chess round-up

SOME players from the Barry Chess Club have recently taken part in other competitions outside the East Glamorgan Chess League.

The club received an invitation from the Penarth Chess Club to take part in the annual Keith Williams Memorial Lighting Chess evening.

One player, Peter Watkins, had already agreed to act as controller for this event. There was a field of 28 who sat down for the five-round tournament in commemoration of a Penarth player who died unexpectedly 10 years ago.

Entry is open to all club members, and invitations are issued to members of other clubs who knew Keith or have links with the Penarth club.

The field included mainly Penarth Chess Club members, but there were six entries from the Barry Chess Club and one member from the Cardiff Chess Club.

Games take place with moves having to be made on the sounding of a buzzer at 10-second intervals, which seems fairly relaxed in the opening but becomes impossibly tight as games move into complex positions.

The games, though played in a friendly spirit, nevertheless become nail-biters. Winners from the first round are

then drawn against other winners, and losers against losers, so that players can progress or drop fairly swiftly until they reach their level.

At the end, there were joint winners of the Keith Williams Shield: David Sully from Penarth and Lee Davis from Barry, who each scored 4.5 points; congratulations to both.

Two of our members also took part in the annual Wakeham Blitz tournament held annually in Llandaff.

This is also a five-round event with both players having only five minutes to complete all their moves.

Most games ended with victory for black with the flag falling to indicate a player had lost on time, although there were a few games ending in checkmate.

Going into the final round there was a three-way tie between Justin Morgans of the Caerphilly Chess Club, Phil Jones of the Barry Chess Club and Marc Wakeham of the Barclays Bank Chess Club, each player having scored three points.

The final round featured a game between Phil and Martin Ricketts, also from the Barry Chess Club. Unfortunately, Phil failed to castle and eventually lost to Martin's mating attack.

This meant that Phil finished in third and Martin in fourth. Justin took the trophy on grading from Marc, as they were both victorious in their final games.

The Barry Chess Club meets each Monday at their home venue of The West End Club, St Nicholas Road, Barry, CF62 6QY, with matches starting at 7.30pm. New players of all ages and standards are welcomed.

For more details, visit: <http://barrychessclub.yolastate.com/>.

P JONES
Club secretary

Freestyle skier backs store's charity drive



Specsavers Barry's Jamie Pullen with freestyle skier Robert Taylor.

A FREESTYLE skier from Barry is helping his local Specsavers store raise money for sufferers of macular disease.

Robert Taylor (28) is currently in training for the 2014 Winter Olympics and paid a visit to the store to show his support for the campaign.

Macular disease causes severe visual impairment to around 250,000 people across the UK. The store is collecting old mobile phones and

used inkjet cartridges, which will be recycled and the money raised donated to the Macular Disease Society.

Mr Taylor explained: "A big cause of macular disease is exposure to UV light, which is a particular concern for skiers as UV levels are greater at higher altitude."

You can drop off mobile phones and inkjet cartridges directly at the store, which is located at 108 Holton Road in Barry, or call 01446 704910 for more information.

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William's Welsh call-up

WILLIAM Painter has been selected to play for Wales at badminton over Easter in Belgium at under-17 level.

William, who lives and goes to school in Cowbridge, has played badminton from the age of six and has represented Wales at under-13 and 15 level

He is coached by the Cris Rees academy, who currently have eight internationals playing and training out of Cowbridge leisure centre. Six of these play for the Vale Badminton Club in Cowbridge, which makes this

one of the strongest clubs in Wales.

William has worked hard this year and trains five days a week and competes on Saturdays or Sundays from Essex to Welshpool.

Thanks go to Cris Rees who spends a lot of time coaching and mentoring him, and to the Vale Council for sponsoring William with an academy card which has really help William progress to this level.

His family and friends are very proud of him and wish him all the best for Belgium.

MP



GEM sport

Christmas swimmers make a splash as Porthcawl gives a round of applause!

PHOTOGRAPHS by GLYN EVANS

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THE Porthcawl Christmas Morning Swim has grown to such an extent that it attracts around 1,000 swimmers and more than twice as many spectators.

It has also become a magnet for local photographers, all looking to capture an image from a day that has plenty of colour and that particular brand of British eccentricity!

Glen Evans was at the water's edge, catching local people as they braved the cold sea!

Joe is looking for sponsorship

A local boy from Pencoed is seeking sponsorship as he aims to make his mark in the world of Super Bikes.

Joe Thomas was 13 when he started club racing and within months he had amassed a number of wins, qualified for a national licence, and found himself on the third row of the grid at a British Super Bikes meeting in the Monster Energy Motostar 125 race.

The series he races in

is the televised British Super Bikes, which has attracted 368,000 race day spectators and 8 million television viewers on Eurosport and ITV in the 2011 season.

He has been entirely self-funded for the last seven years but at this level is keen to involve local and national business and is looking for funding at any level.

For more information contact Alun Thomas on 07974 960337 or email alunthomas.eng@hotmail.co.uk



Bridge results

BRIDGEND Bridge club results for Wednesday December 12:

First, Mary Moore and John Beard, second, Geoff Barnes and Peter Bugden, third, Irene Thomas and Graham Jones.

Results for Friday, December 24: First, Mary Moore and John Beard, second, Barrie Waite and Terry Evans, third, Vida Halford and Glyn Williams.

The club will be open on Friday, January 4, and the new year's party is on Friday, January 11, and the AGM takes place on Friday, January 18.

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